

# The Biblical Sabbath is from Dawn to Dawn

Rev. Travis Fentiman

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To the only Savior,  
The Lord of the Sabbath

“Hear ye Him.”

Mt. 17:5

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# Table of Contents

Introduction	3
I. The Old Testament	7
1. Days of the Week of Creation	7
The First Day	7
The Rest of the Days of Creation Week	10
Objections	12
Gen. 1:5 in History	14
2. Survey of the Old Testament	17
The Evening-to-Day Sequence	27
3. Gathering of Manna and the Keeping of the Sabbath	29
4. Fourth Commandment	30
5. Passover and the Day of Atonement	31
6. Closing of the Gates for the Sabbath in Nehemiah	35
Conclusion	36
II. Calendar Issues & the Later Jewish Practice	39
1. Calendar Issues	39
2. Later Jewish Practice	43
Septuagint	48
Philo	49
Josephus	53
Conclusion	56
III. New Testament	59
1. Survey of the New Testament	59
2. Evening-to-Evening?	62
3. Roman Civil Reckoning & the Gospel of John	65
4. Buying of Spices in the Gospels	68
Lk. 23:53, 'The Sabbath was drawing near'	69
5. The Resurrection	75
Mt. 28:1 & Evening-to-Evening?	76
Objection: 3 Days in the Grave; Day of Crucifixion; Synoptics & John	77
6. After the Resurrection	83
7. Midnight-to-Midnight?	86
Conclusion	88
IV. Reformed History	91
Conclusion	97
Bibliography	101

# The Biblical Sabbath is From Dawn to Dawn

Rev. Travis Fentiman<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

As Scripture teaches that we are to “remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy,”<sup>2</sup> so the question of ‘When does the Sabbath begin?’ is of concern to every person. This article will demonstrate in detail from Scripture that the Biblical, Sabbath since Creation has always been from, and is to be observed from, dawn to dawn.

It is commonly assumed that the Old Testament teaches an evening-to-evening reckoning of the Sabbath, largely as this has been the dominant practice of Judaism since the rabbinic era. The numerous Jewish testimonies that will be quoted otherwise may be surprising. Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, one time chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary,<sup>3</sup> has conceded that “...the [Biblical] festival calendar clearly alludes to a division of time that regards the evening as part of the day just ended...” and he speaks of “the talmudic innovation of reckoning a day from the eve before...”<sup>4</sup>

Many articles about when the Sabbath begins only bring into account about a quarter or a third of the available Biblical evidence, leaving their analyses fragmentary and their conclusions ill-founded.<sup>5</sup> Hence, there is a need for a fresh, comprehensive

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<sup>2</sup> God instituted the Sabbath at Creation (2:1-4) upon the natural order for all people, He reiterated this moral precept in the 4th Commandment (Ex. 20:8-11) and the New Testament upholds this observance (Mt. 12:1-8; Lk. 4:16; Jn. 20:19; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Heb. 4:9; Rev. 1:10). For reformed resources upholding the continuing moral obligation of the Sabbath, see <https://reformedbooksonline.com/topics/topics-by-subject/the-lords-day/> To see that the Sabbath changed from the seventh day of the week in the Old Testament to the first day of the week with Christ’s Resurrection, see the resources at <https://reformedbooksonline.com/topics/topics-by-subject/the-lords-day/change-of-the-sabbath-to-the-first-day/>.

<sup>3</sup> New York, NY. For a bio see <http://www.jtsa.edu/ismar-schorsch> All websites referenced in this article were accessed in April of 2018.

<sup>4</sup> “Day Begins with Night” <http://www.jtsa.edu/the-day-begins-with-night>

<sup>5</sup> Leon Morris says, “H.R. Stroes has a full examination of the Biblical evidence in an article entitled, ‘Does the Day Begin in the Evening or Morning?’ (*Vetus Testamentum*, XVI, 1966), pp. 460-75.” *The Gospel According to John: the English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) 158. While Stroes has a fuller coverage of the Biblical evidence than most, Morris’s claim is hardly the case. Samuele Bacchiocchi (Seventh Day Adventist; he takes a ‘Co-existence View’) likewise has one of the (relatively) fuller treatments: “The Reckoning of the Day in Bible Times,”

survey and analysis, in one place, of all the relevant, scriptural material in order to establish this Biblical doctrine.<sup>6</sup> In doing this, we will also show that the erroneous, rabbinic practice of keeping the Sabbath evening-to-evening was of a late-development. Arguments against the midnight-to-midnight view will be given along the way.<sup>7</sup>

To summarize the Biblical evidence, in short: the Hebrew word for ‘morning’ in Gen. 1 more specifically, and in context, means dawn, which closes the day’s activities after evening and begins the next day. This morning-to-morning reckoning is confirmed by above 30 scriptures in the Old Testament. The first explicitly recorded, regular observance of the Sabbath by Israel (in the wilderness, Ex. 16:22-30) was prescribed by the Lord to be morning-to-morning. The Fourth Commandment does not explicitly mention when the Sabbath begins, assuming that the hearers already understand this information or that it can be known by the light of nature. The Levitical calendar for numbering the holy days of Israel, and its sacrificial system, reckoned according to natural days. The calendrical counting of the Passover and Day of Atonement were no exceptions to this, though their holy rites started in the evening. Nor does the prescribed beginning of these holy rites reflect upon the timing of the observance of the weekly Sabbath. Lastly, in the Old Testament, the passage about the closing of the gates of Jerusalem by Nehemiah in the evening before the Sabbath is too ambiguous to make certain conclusions on, though we find it to favor the morning reckoning.

The Gospels and Acts continue this reckoning by natural days in numerous verses and account the hours of the day from sunrise, as did the Jewish Temple. Mk. 1:32, about persons bringing their loved-ones to Jesus to be healed on Saturday evening, is inconclusive for an evening-to-evening reckoning of the Sabbath, and the influence of the rabbis upon the common people for such a reckoning has often been over-estimated. The most plausible passage for an evening-reckoning of the Sabbath in the New Testament, concerning the events of Jesus’ burial and the buying of spices on Friday evening (Lk. 23:50-56), is found to be incompatible with an evening-reckoning and consistent with the morning-view.

The Resurrection accounts assume continuity with a morning reckoning, and are clear, from the larger Scriptural context, that Jesus rose at dawn, which was the beginning of the first day of the week. Jn. 20:19 speaks of Jesus meeting with his

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<http://www.groverproctor.us/sb/sb-day.txt> For the numerous articles which have a much more inadequate coverage of the Biblical data, see the bibliography.

<sup>6</sup> “It is a holy labor (saith one) to inquire after the beginning of holy rest.” Thomas Shepard, “The Beginning of the Sabbath” in *Theses Sabbaticae* in *The Works of Thomas Shepard*, vol. 3 (Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1853), Thesis 1.

<sup>7</sup> The noon-to-noon view is hardly credible and hence will not be considered here. For arguments against it, see the appendix to Greg Price, “When Does The Sabbath Begin? Morning or Evening?” Price takes a midnight-to-midnight view. <http://www.reformedpresbytery.org/books/sabbath/sabbath.htm>

disciples on that Resurrection Day in the evening, accounting it to be the first day of the week. Acts 20:7-11 evidences a morning reckoning of the Sabbath by the apostolic Christians.

As extra-Biblical evidence is often brought into this question and deserves to be considered, so this article will give one of the fullest surveys and analyses of the extra-Biblical data available, and show that there are significant reasons to believe that there was a morning-to-morning keeping of the Sabbath by a significant portion of the Jews in the first century. The strongest, datable evidence for a certain, evening-to-evening Sabbath in Israel during the first century is not found in the Word of God, but in the ancient Jewish historian Josephus. How this bears on the complex, historical picture will be treated of in the conclusion of this article. The witness of Christian, reformed theologians from the Reformation and puritan eras, as well as individuals from later periods, will also be surveyed on the topic.

While affirming that other modes of time-reckoning besides from dawn are morally lawful and pragmatically useful, especially in living in civil societies that often reckon time variously, yet the Fourth Commandment holds out God's resting on the First Sabbath in Creation Week (Gen. 2:2-4), from dawn-to-dawn, as an obliging example to us (Ex. 20:11). The beginning and ending of the Day which God positively<sup>8</sup> sanctified with his resting thereon and his blessing is not indifferent or to be relegated purely to civil custom.

While we are content to argue a dawn-to-dawn reckoning of the Sabbath from Scripture alone, and will, we would also note that, as this teaching derives from Creation, so it likewise has been written into the Book of Nature. The most natural way of reckoning the beginning of a day is by starting with the morning, when the sun rises.<sup>9</sup> This reckoning has been common to a large share of societies throughout world history and we often use this method in everyday speech. Morning is when we get up; it is when daylight allows us to begin working, and it is, practically speaking, when our

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<sup>8</sup> Note that, while the obligation to devote a due proportion of time to the Lord is taught by natural principles, the specific selection of what time that should be has been sovereignly appointed by God (see WCF 21.7). Hence, not only has the beginning and ending of this time necessarily been appointed by God, but it is to be looked for in the Word. God positively began and ended his rest at specific times, which are the book-ends for the time that He sanctified unto Himself, and the Word tells us what those times were. That God has not left the beginning of the Sabbath indifferent, see this argued well by Shepard, "The Beginning of the Sabbath," 216.

<sup>9</sup> The *Oxford Classical Dictionary* speaks of "...the natural reckoning of the day from dawn..." (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1949), 909.

day begins. So far from nature being contrary to Scripture, we will find that Scripture confirms and perfects this pattern woven into nature from Creation.<sup>10</sup>

We hope to leave no doubt in your heart and mind as to when the Lord's Sabbath begins and ends, that you may be accounted with the early Christian disciples who "rested the sabbath day according to the commandment." (Lk. 23:56)

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<sup>10</sup> Herman Witsius (1636-1708): "For, as grace supposes nature, and makes it perfect; so the truths revealed in the Gospel are built on those made known by the light of nature." *The Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man: Comprehending a Complete Body of Divinity*, trans. William Crookshank, 2 vols. (London: R. Baynes, 1822; repr., Escondido, Calif.: den Dulk Christian Foundation, 1990), 3.5.15 (vol. 1, p. 350).

## I. The Old Testament

### 1. The Days of the Week of Creation

#### The First Day

The paradigm-setting days of the Creation Week in Genesis 1 are commonly understood to entail being reckoned according to the evening-to-evening pattern. The King James Version (KJV) translates the Hebrew of Gen. 1:5 as: “And the evening and the morning were the first day.” The American Standard Version translates the Hebrew as literally and woodenly as possible (though the phrase is grammatically capable of numerous constructions):<sup>11</sup>

וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד

“And-there-was evening and-there-was morning, one day.”

The evening-to-evening viewpoint understands the word ‘morning’ to signify the whole of the daytime. Note, however, that even in English ‘morning’ does not mean the whole daytime: half of the daylight hours (afternoon) are not a part of the morning. Not only is morning only *part* of the daytime, but the Hebrew word used here for ‘morning’ (בֹּקֶר *boquer*) more commonly and specifically signifies the inception of the morning, or dawn, when light breaks through the darkness. The standard Hebrew lexicon of Brown, Driver and Briggs defines *boquer* as having the following nuances of meaning (citing numerous Biblical examples of each),<sup>12</sup> all of which imply, not the whole daytime,<sup>13</sup> but rather the inception of the morning:

- (a) the end of night;
- (b) the coming of dawn and daylight;
- (c) the coming of sunrise;
- (d) the beginning of day (Ruth 2:7 with 2:14; 2 Sam. 24:15, etc.)

...

Brown-Driver-Briggs (BDB, 133) defines the original import of *boquer*, citing Gen. 1:5, as meaning: “*split, penetrate, as the dawn [does] the darkness, light through cloud rifts, etc.*” They give the sense of this phrase as culminating the events of the previous

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<sup>11</sup> Dashes have been added.

<sup>12</sup> Francis Brown, S.R. Driver & Charles Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Hendrickson, 1996), 133-134. Compare also William Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Based upon the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner* (Eerdmans/Brill, 1988) 46.

<sup>13</sup> “This word means ‘morning,’ though not the period of time before noon. Rather it indicates the point of time at which night is changing to day or that time at the end of night.” “Morning, *Boquer*” in W.E. Vine, *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (1940) [http://www.ultimatebiblelibrary.com/Vines\\_Expository\\_Dictionary.pdf](http://www.ultimatebiblelibrary.com/Vines_Expository_Dictionary.pdf)



verses (the phrase signifying a chronological sequence, not a summary): 'the day ended with evening, and the night with morning [*boquer*].' (134)

Hence the meaning of Gen. 1:5 is that after the events which happened previously to this verse on the First Day (1:3-4), there was evening and then came the break of dawn, which completed one day. The First Day of Creation was not constituted by the sequence of the whole evening and the whole daytime, but rather the First Day ended with the coming of evening and then the breaking of the morning.

The day-to-night cycle is present in the First Day of Creation: God said 'Let there be light', and there was light (1:3). God divided the light from darkness (v. 4) and then (note the order) God "called the light 'Day', and the darkness He called 'Night'." (v. 5) The day-night cycle started on the First Day with the breaking forth of light, continued while there was light, then there was evening, and the breaking of dawn ended the evening and completed the First Day.

In Biblical Hebrew there was not punctuation as we have it in English, so there does not need not be a hard stop between the two 'sentences' of Gen. 1:5. Rather, the verse naturally reads continuously: "And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night, and the evening and the morning [dawn] were the first day." This expresses a succession of cumulative events in historical narrative rather than the end phrase being a divided-off, concluding, summary of what went before it.<sup>14</sup> Herbert C. Leupold, the early-1900's, conservative, Lutheran expositor comments:

To try to make this [phrase] mean that the day began with evening, as days did according to the later Jewish reckoning... fails utterly, because verse 5 reports the conclusion of this day's work not its beginning...

The verse, however, presents not an addition of items but the conclusion of a progression. On this day there had been the creation of heaven and earth in the rough, then the creation of light, the approval of light, the separation of day and night. Now with evening the divine activities ceased: they are works of light not works of darkness. The evening ('erebh), of course, merges into night, and the night terminates with morning. But by the time morning is reached, the first day is concluded, as the account says succinctly, 'the first day,' and everything is in readiness for the second day's task. For 'evening' marks the conclusion of the day, and 'morning' marks the conclusion of

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<sup>14</sup> James Durham: "Moses, his scope is not to show what part of one day is before another, but to divide one day from another, and to show what goes to make a whole day, to wit... an evening added to the morning which preceded, that made the first, second, and third day, etc... as evening now being past as the morning before, God did put a period by and with the evening to the first day, it being the evening completes the day, and divides it from the following day... the afternoon or evening is first named, because, 1. The day is not complete without it, seeing it completes it; 2. Because the day cannot be extended beyond it, now the first day is closed, because the evening of it is come." *The Law Unsealed, or, a Practical Exposition of the Ten Commandments* (Glasgow: John Bryce, 1777), 247.

the night. It is these conclusions, which terminate the preceding, that are to be made prominent.<sup>15</sup>

If Moses had intended to convey that a whole span of daylight came after the evening in order to complete the First Day, the Hebrew word *yom* יום, which commonly means the whole period of daylight,<sup>16</sup> would have been much more fitting. Likewise, the meaning of 'evening' (*ereb* ערב) in prose<sup>17</sup> is the period of sunset, not the whole, twelve hour period of night.<sup>18</sup> If Moses had intended to convey the whole 12-hour period of night, the normal word for that, *liylah*, would have been much more clear. Instead Moses specifically distinguishes these words in Gen. 1:5: "And God called the light 'Day' [*yom*], and the darkness he called 'Night' [*liylah*]. And the evening [*ereb*] and the morning [*boquer*, dawn] were the first day." This very distinction by Moses argues that the evening and 'morning' were not equivalent to the preceding day and night in reverse order.

Some commentators, realizing this, claim that 'evening' and 'morning' are being used in Gen. 1:5 as a synecdoche, evening and morning standing as parts for the whole night and whole day. However:

(1) This phrase in Gen. 1:5 is not poetry, but has the characteristics of historical narrative. This is seen in the consecutively repeated phrase "and there was," which, in Hebrew, is characteristically indicative of historical narrative. The Hebrew style denotes orderly, historical occurrence and the passing of time: 'and there was evening, and then there was morning'. Words used in historical narrative are usually more precise than in poetry.<sup>19</sup> Further, Gen. 1 as a whole, the larger context, is historical narrative and not poetry.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (London: Evangelical Press, 1972), 56-57.

<sup>16</sup> Gen. 1:5a, 14,16, 18; 8:22; 29:7; 31:39-40; 24:18; Num. 11:32; Dt. 9:11; Jn. 11:9; 1 Sam. 30:12; Prov. 4:18; Eccl. 8:16; Amos 5:8; etc.

<sup>17</sup> Compare BDB, 787-788 and Ex. 18:13; Dt. 23:11; Josh. 10:26; Jud. 19:9; 1 Sam. 14:24; 30:17; 2 Sam. 11:2; 1 Kn. 17:6; Ps. 59:6,14; 90:6; 104:23; Eccl. 11:6, etc. The two exceptions to this, Job 7:4 and Prov. 7:9, are poetic, as often different or larger senses are given to words in poetry which they do not normally bear in prose.

<sup>18</sup> John Cotton, in seeking to evidence that 'evening' may mean 'night', references Gen. 29:23 and Dt. 28:67. *John Cotton on Psalmody and the Sabbath* (Puritan Reprints, 2006), 95. However, Dt. 28:67 is by no means clear, and even in Gen. 29:23 (where there is not enough light to see; depending on the time of year, this may not have been long after sunset) the verse refers to a specific point in time during that 'night', but does not refer to the whole twelve hour period.

<sup>19</sup> Notice in the poetic usage of *eber* as standing for the dark night in Job 7:4 and Prov. 7:9 that the word is surrounded by a repetition of synonyms meaning the same, giving a clear indication as to the word's irregular meaning in these instances. This is not the case in Gen. 1. Nor is *eber* in Job 7:4 and Prov. 7:9 in contrast with *boquer*, as it is in Gen. 1.

<sup>20</sup> See Edward Young, *Studies in Genesis One* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1975), Kenneth Gentry, *As it is Written: The Genesis Account Literal or Literary? Dismantling the Framework*

(2) There are zero examples in the rest of the Hebrew Old Testament where *boquer* ever stands by synecdoche for a whole, half-day period. The same is true of *ereb* in prose.

(3) If Moses had intended to signify the whole night and the whole daytime, this could have been much more easily and clearly done without synecdoches with *liylah* and *yom*.

(4) If 'evening' and 'morning' stood for the whole nighttime and daytime in the prominent, first chapter of Genesis by synecdoche, and if the Jews of that time understood the use of the words in that way, one would expect that those words would have commonly taken on a synecdoche usage later in Hebrew society and Biblical literature. But they did not.

A problem with the evening-to-evening view is that evening-to-dawn in Gen. 1:5 does not constitute a whole day, or a complete cycle of one day, but, at best, only half of a day (12 hours).<sup>21</sup>

One of the most intensive commentaries into the Hebrew of Genesis was written by Carl Friedrich Keil (1807–1888), a German, Lutheran, conservative, Biblical scholar. As a leading Hebraicist of his day, he said, referring to the view that the evening and morning composed and produced one day: "The rendering, 'out of evening and morning, there came one day,' is at variance with grammar... because such a thought would require ליום אחד", which construction is not present in the Hebrew of Gen. 1:5.<sup>22</sup>

### The Rest of the Days of Creation Week

The day-night cycle is sustained through the rest of the days of Creation Week. After dawn closes Day One and begins Day Two, God continues his creative work

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*Hypothesis* (Master Books, 2016), Joseph Pipa, Jr, "From Chaos to Cosmos: A Critique of the Non-Literal Interpretations of Genesis 1:1-2:3" and Benjamin Shaw, "The Literal Day Interpretation" in *Did God Create in Six Days*, edited by Joseph Pipa & David Hall (Southern Presbyterian Press and The Covenant Foundation, 1999).

<sup>21</sup> The KJV may be understood in consistency with the morning-to-morning view. The KJV translators' notes provide an alternate translation of the key phrase, more clearly indicating the passing of the evening and morning (which undoubtedly is the sense of the Hebrew): 'And the evening was, and the morning was etc.' Thus, the key phrase in the KJV may be read as coming after, taking into view and concluding the previous events at Creation: 'And the evening and the morning [dawn] were the first day.' Literatura Bautista, "An exhaustive listing of the marginal notes of the 1611 edition of the King James Bible," <http://en.literaturabautista.com/exhaustive-listing-marginal-notes-1611-edition-king-james-bible>

<sup>22</sup> Read his few paragraphs arguing for the morning-to-morning interpretation of the days of Creation Week in C.F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Hendrickson, 2006), on Gen. 1:5.

during the daytime, making the skies and atmosphere and dividing the waters so as to set clouds above the seas. Then evening darkness sets in, and with the end of night at the coming of dawn, the Second Day is completed. (1:8)

On the Fourth Day (after the completion of the Third Day at dawn), during daylight, God created the sun and moon to rule (by being made to instrumentally provide the light for) the day and night. Notice the *day-night* sequence of what is narrated according to the time elapsing on the Fourth Day:

And God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide *the day from the night*; and let them be for signs... for *days*... and God made two great lights; the greater light to rule *the day*, and the lesser light to rule *the night*... and God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over *the day and over the night*, and to divide *the light from the darkness*... and the *evening and morning [dawn]* were the Fourth Day.<sup>23</sup>

Day Four demonstrates (along with the same day-night sequence in Gen. 1:5a on the First Day) how light and darkness (in this order) alternated within each day of Creation Week. This alternation ought to be interpreted in consistency with the evening and morning (dawn) clause at the closing of each day of Creation Week, rather than conflicting with the order of it. The morning-to-morning pattern in the Creation Week is especially significant as the sun and moon, and their revolutions, were appointed 'for signs and for seasons, and for days and years.' (Gen. 1:14)

Day Seven, the Sabbath (Gen. 2:2-3), comes after the dawn which completes Day Six (Gen. 1:31). During the daylight of the Seventh Day, instead of God working as He had previously done during the daylight of each previous day, He sanctifies this day by resting and blessing it (Gen. 2:2). The Sabbath Day continued through the evening and ended upon the following daybreak when the morning of the first day of the week then began.

The puritans Robert Cleaver<sup>24</sup> and John Owen,<sup>25</sup> as well as John Lightfoot,<sup>26</sup> note that the 'evening and morning' phrase is not used in the Biblical text with regard to the 7<sup>th</sup> Day of the Creation, the first Sabbath (Gen. 2:2-4). They draw from this that, while the

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<sup>23</sup> Gen. 1:14,16-19.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Cleaver, *A declaration of the christian sabbath Wherein the sanctifying of the Lords-day, is proued to bee agreeable of God, and to the Gospell of Iesus Christ* (London: A. M[atthewes] and I. N[orton] for Robert Milbourne, 1625), 182-183.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Andrew Myers, "When Does the Lord's Day Begin?" <https://reformedbooksonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/when-does-the-lords-day-begin-myers1.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> John Lightfoot, *The Christian Sabbath: a Sermon* (Dublin: Edward Madden, 1838), 117-8.

whole Sabbath day is to be sanctified, an evening-to-morning order is not essential to the observance of it.

God's pattern of acting on, and his sanctification of the Sabbath Day during Creation Week is a primary grounds and reason for man's duty to hallow the Sabbath, per the Fourth Commandment (Ex. 20:8,11): "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy... For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." Hence, we ought to rest and sanctify the Sabbath Day as God did, from dawn-till-dawn.

### Objections

The New England puritan, Thomas Shephard, in seeking to buttress the evening-to-evening viewpoint, makes much of the fact that the First Day began with darkness before God made light (Gen. 1:1-2; Theses 19, 77-89). That the First Day began with darkness is affirmed.<sup>27</sup> However, the First Day, which had this additional aspect to it, was clearly an exception to the rest of the regular days of Creation Week which both started and ended with dawn. The one-time exception of the First Day seems to be due to God sovereignly choosing to successively order the building of his full creation from nothing in progressive incremental steps from what is dark, without any light, incomplete and inglorious, to what is full of light, complete and glorious. When the Fourth Commandment obliges us to keep the Sabbath, it is not upon the pattern of the First Day of Creation, but after the actions of God on the Seventh Day of Creation (which was from dawn until dawn).

In confirmation of the morning-to-morning view, some have thought that the Hebrew word for 'evening' (*ereb*) derives from *arab*,<sup>28</sup> which means 'to become evening, grow dark' (c.f. Jud. 19:9; Isa. 24:11). The root word implies that the evening starts with light which is declining to darkness;<sup>29</sup> hence *ereb*'s basic meaning of 'sunset' entails a

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<sup>27</sup> Ex. 20:11 says that 'in six days the Lord made heaven and earth...', which means that Gen. 1:1-2, which started with darkness, must have been reckoned as part of the First Day.

<sup>28</sup> E.g. Strong's Concordance  
<https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?t=kjv&strongs=h6153>

<sup>29</sup> Numerous commentators have pointed out that the evening begins with, and implies, light first. For example, the *English Annotations* (1645): "...for Even is the declining light of the fore-going day; and the morning may as well be called the end of the night past, as the beginning of the day following: and so diverse of the learned by the 'evening' understand the day, as the end thereof; and by 'morning' the night, at which time it is at an end: for denominations are many times taken from the end, because thereby the thing is made complete: so the whole week is called by the name Sabbath, Levit. 23:15 & Matth. 28:1 [in the Greek], because with it the week is wholly made up and fully finished." Certain Learned Divines, *Annotations upon All the Books of the Old and New Testament; wherein the Text is Explained*,

progressive declining of light to darkness. However, the darkness of the very beginning of the First Day in Gen. 1:2 had no light before it or during it. Hence this darkness could not be called a diminishing of light, the declining of the day or an 'evening'. If Moses had intended at the end of Gen. 1:5 to speak summarily of the pitch black of Gen. 1:2 (as Shepard claims), the Hebrew word for 'night' (*liylah*) would have been more accurate. However, as Moses used the word 'evening', Gen. 1:5, rather naturally refers to the progressive declining of the daylight of Gen. 1:4.

Another argument for the evening-to-evening interpretation is that when the 'night' and 'day' sequence occurs in verses of the Old Testament,<sup>30</sup> the phrase often refers to a whole, twenty-four hour day. Thus, 'the evening and the morning' of Gen. 1 does not refer only to the latter half of the First Day, but should be interpreted as a whole day. There are a number of problems, though, with this argument:

(1) Verses with the day-night sequence in Scripture far outnumber the ten or so verses with the night-day sequence.

(2) The various variations of the phrase 'night' and 'day' (*liylah* and *yom*, e.g. 1 Sam. 25:26; 1 Kn. 8:29; Isa. 27:3; Jer. 14:17) use different Hebrew words than the 'evening' and 'morning' phrase of Gen. 1 (*ereb* and *boquer*). *Liylah* and *yom* may regularly mean the whole nighttime and whole daylight period respectively, whereas *boquer* and *ereb* do not.

(3) Where 'morning' and 'evening' are used together, in this sequence (which is the opposite sequence as that in Gen. 1), they do not mean a whole 24 hour period, but simply the limited periods of the day which are morning and evening.<sup>31</sup> When appropriate prepositions are used to signify the time between morning and evening, or from evening to morning (which distinctive prepositions are not used in Gen. 1), the phrase only means half of a day (Ex. 18:13; 27:21;<sup>32</sup> Acts 28:23).

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*Doubts Resolved, Paralleled, and Various Readings Observed* (London: John Legatt and John Raworth, 1645), in location. See also Durham, *Law Unsealed*, 247.

<sup>30</sup> These instances will be examined in a further section below.

<sup>31</sup> E.g. Ex. 16:8; 1 Kn. 17:6; 2 Chron. 2:4; 13:11; Ezra 3:3; Ps. 55:17; 65:8; 90:6; Eccl. 11:6; Isa. 17:14; Eze. 33:22; etc. 1 Sam. 17:16 is sometimes quoted as an instance otherwise: "And the Philistine drew near morning and evening, and presented himself forty days." Yet Goliath presented himself against the army of Israel at limited points of time in the morning and in the evening for these forty days, not all-day and all-night long for 40 days. The Hebrew word for 'morning' in this verse is also different from *boquer*. Nor is 1 Chron. 16:40 an exception. The morning and evening burnt offerings were not offered throughout the whole day, or the whole day and night, but only (in the Second Temple period) at 9 A.M. and 3 P.M. Further, the adverb 'continually' which modifies the phrase 'morning and evening' in 1 Chron. 16:40 is not present in Gen. 1.

<sup>32</sup> This verse deals directly with the timing of lighting candles, not with the periods of the day as such. There were no windows in the Holy Place in the Tabernacle, so candles would have had to have

(4) There is only one relevant passage in the Old Testament outside of Gen. 1 which uses the same Hebrew terms 'evening' and 'morning' (*ereb* and *boquer*) together in this sequence: Dan. 8:14 in the Hebrew,<sup>33</sup> and Dan. 8:26. However, it is not by any means clear that these verses are referring to a whole day of twenty-four hours; rather, they probably do not, as will be seen below.

(5) The relevant phrases in Scripture involving 'evening' and 'morning' and 'night and day' are idiomatic, the idiom, in the latter case, sometimes referring to a whole day. The style of the relevant phrase in Gen. 1:5, however, is not idiomatic. The Hebrew construction in Gen. 1 (*vai'hee ereb vai'hee boquer*) is unique, not repeated elsewhere in the Old Testament, and, as has been noted, is characteristic of historical narrative. An idiomatic phrase might go far in determining the sense of the same idiomatic phrase used elsewhere, but it ought not to determine the meaning of similar terms not being used idiomatically.

What initially may have seemed like a strong argument to interpret the days of Gen. 1 as evening-to-evening is seen to be groundless and gives that much more strength to the morning-to-morning position.

### Gen. 1:5 in History

The leading, surviving, literary representative of ancient Hellenistic Judaism, Philo, a contemporary of Jesus and Paul, took a 'dawn' interpretation of Gen. 1:5, as will be analyzed below. Amongst the early Church, Ambrose (c. 340–397) and Chrysostom (c. 349–407) held to the morning-evening sequence in Gen. 1.<sup>34</sup> Augustine (354–430) expounded Gen. 1:5 saying, "the complete day cannot be said to have passed until night too has passed and morning has come to begin a new day..."<sup>35</sup> Notably, during the Middle Ages Rashbam, Rabbi Samuel b. Meir (1100–1160) taught a morning-to-morning view of Gen. 1. Rashbam said of Gen. 1:5 that:

It does not say that it was nighttime and it was daytime which made one day; but it says 'it was evening,' which means that the period of the daytime came to an end and the

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been used during the daytime. Whereas the priests may otherwise have let the candles go out at night, the Lord specially commands that they should burn the candles even 'from evening to morning' (through the night, a half-day period) so that the candles would 'burn always'. See Robert Jameson, Andrew Fausset & David Brown, *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*, vol. 1 (Hendrickson, 1997), in location.

<sup>33</sup> BDB calls the Hebrew construction in this verse 'peculiar' (134).

<sup>34</sup> Cited in Andrew Willet, *Hexapla in Genesin & Exodum: that is, a sixfold commentary upon the two first bookes of Moses, being Genesis and Exodus* (London: John Haviland, 1633) in location.

<sup>35</sup> Augustine, *De Gen. Cont. Man.*, I, 16, as given in P. J. Heawood, "The Beginning of the Jewish Day," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, XXXVI (1945–1946): 395.

light disappeared. And when it says 'it was morning,' it means that the period of the nighttime came to an end and the morning dawned. Then one whole day was completed.<sup>36</sup>

During the puritan era, the famed *English Annotations* (popularly known as the *Westminster Annotations*) on Gen. 1:5 mentioned both the evening-reckoning and morning-reckoning views, though leaned its weight to one side, saying that:

Yet it may be with good probability thought that at the first... the day-natural began with the light: for Even is the declining light of the fore-going day; and the morning may as well be called the end of the night past, as the beginning of the day following: and so diverse of the learned...<sup>37</sup>

The puritans William Perkins (Myers) and Thomas Vincent<sup>38</sup> take a morning-to-morning view of Gen. 1:5, as did the later 1800's, American, southern presbyterian, William Plumer (Myers). Franz Delitzsch and Samuel R. Driver were leading Hebraicists of the late-1800's and early-1900's who also shared this view.<sup>39</sup> Other Christian commentators from this time period which concurred included Melancthon Jacobus (an old Princeton Seminary professor),<sup>40</sup> Arthur Peake (an

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<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Jacob Lauterbach, "When Does the Sabbath Day Begin?" in *Rabbinic Essays* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1951) 446-447 and other works. Rashbam's full exegesis of Gen. 1-2:3 is found at <http://www.iahushua.com/ST-RP/twt.htm> 'A concise survey' of 'ancient and modern commentators' on the dispute in Gen. 1 is given in M.M. Kasher, "A Peculiar Explanation of the Rashbam of the Verse 'it was evening and it was morning,'" *Miqraoth Gedoloth*, I (New York: Shulsinger, 1950) 16-20 according to Shemaryahu Talmon, "Reckoning the Sabbath in the First and the Early Second Temple Period - From the Evening or the Morning?" 9. <http://hsf.bgu.ac.il/cjt/files/Shabbat-Book/Shabbath-English-9-33-Talmon.pdf> Ibn Ezra (1092-1167) has been quoted for the morning-view from his commentary on Genesis: "1:5. by naming the light 'day' and the darkness 'night.' The diurnal sphere revolved once, day blended into evening and night blended into dawn, day one." "1:31. Elohim understood that all that Elohim had created was very good. The diurnal sphere revolved once, day blended into evening and night blended into dawn, the sixth day from day one." <http://www.iahushua.com/ST-RP/twt.htm> However, Talmon lists him as taking the evening-to-evening view. "Reckoning the Sabbath," 9-10. The truth is probably in the middle: "Ibn Ezra's attack in his *Iggeret HaShabbat* (*Kerem Hemed* V [Prague 1830], p. 115 ff. was directed not against [Rashbam] R. Samuel b. Meir's interpretation of Genesis 1:5, but against those heretical sects who drew practical conclusions from this interpretation and observed the Sabbath from morning to morning." Lauterbach, "When does the Sabbath Day Begin?" 450, n. 60.

<sup>37</sup> The section on Genesis in the first edition was done by John Ley, a Westminster divine. The more popular third edition of 1657, revised by John Richardson, reads the same.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas Vincent, *The Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly Explained and Proved from Scripture* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2004), 139-140.

<sup>39</sup> Franz Delitzsch, *A New Commentary on Genesis*, Translated by Sophia Taylor (New York: Scribner & Welford, 1889), in location; Samuel Driver, *The Book of Genesis with Introduction and Notes*, 10th ed. (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1916), in location.

<sup>40</sup> Melancthon Jacobus, *Notes, Critical and Explanatory, on the Book of Genesis. Two Volumes in One*, (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1873), in location.



English, Methodist, Biblical scholar)<sup>41</sup> and Otto Procksch (a German, Protestant, Old Testament scholar; cited in Leupold, in loc.). During the mid-1900's, the distinguished Old Testament scholar and professor at early Westminster Seminary, E.J. Young expressed (89):

When the light was removed by the appearance of darkness, it was evening, and the coming of light brought morning, the completion of a day. The days therefore, are to be reckoned from morning to morning...

A scholarly, modern, Christian and evangelical commentary which takes the morning-to-morning view of the days of Creation Week is Victor P. Hamilton's, *The Book of Genesis – Chapter 1-17 in the New International Commentary on the Old Testament*.<sup>42</sup> A reformed, evangelical scholar who takes this view of Gen. 1 is Kenneth Gentry.<sup>43</sup> Further works which take this view include *A Dictionary of the Bible*,<sup>44</sup> *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible* and *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopaedia of the Bible*.<sup>45</sup> E. Konig, H. Ginzel (both in Talmon, 10), H.R. Dillmann,<sup>46</sup> Stroes<sup>47</sup> and Roland Guerin de Vaux<sup>48</sup> are other scholars who have asserted the morning to morning view of Gen. 1.

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<sup>41</sup> *A Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Arthur Peake (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1920), in location.

<sup>42</sup> Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis – Chapter 1-17* (Eerdmans, 1990), in location.

<sup>43</sup> Gentry understood the later, 'ritual' and 'symbolic', Mosaic practice in the Old Testament to have been from evening to evening (post-Mt. Sinai), however he states that "Genesis 1 presents literal days reckoned according to the civil... pattern." He further says (quoting Cassuto in the process), "...the temporal pattern 'evening and morning' may seem unusual (because it assumes the day began in the morning, passes into evening, and closes at the next morning)... We see evening closing the daytime, followed by morning which closes the darkness, thereby beginning a new day (e.g., Gen. 19:33-34; Ex. 10:13; 2 Sam. 2:32)." Kenneth Gentry & Michael Butler, *Yea, Hath God Said? The Framework Hypothesis/Six-Day Creation Debate* (Wipf & Stock, 2002) 47.

<sup>44</sup> *A Dictionary of the Bible Dealing with its Language, Literature and Contents, Including the Biblical Theology*, vol. 1, ed. James Hastings, John Selbie, A.B. Davidson, S.R. Driver, H.B. Swete (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), "Cosmogony," 502.

<sup>45</sup> As referenced and quoted by F.J. Steed, "Time: When does the Day Begin?" <http://hos.oztorah.org/fjs/pdf/time.pdf> The morning-view is also taken by ed. Mahler, *Handbuch der jüdischen Chronologie* (Leipzig: G. Fock, 1916) 36-40, per Talmon, "Reckoning the Sabbath," 10.

<sup>46</sup> A. Dillmann, *Genesis: Critically and Exegetically Expounded*, vol. 1, tr. Wm. B. Stevenson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1897), in location, 63.

<sup>47</sup> H.R. Stroes, "Does the Day Begin in the Evening or Morning? Some Biblical Observations," *Vetus Testamentum* 16.4 (Oct., 1966): 474-5.

<sup>48</sup> Vaux (1903-1971) was a French Dominican priest who oversaw research on the Dead Sea Scrolls. *Ancient Israel – Its Life and Institutions*, tr. John McHugh (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1965) 180-183.

Some modern, Jewish, scholarly works and authors which take the morning-to-morning view of Gen. 1 are: Umberto Cassuto's *Commentary on the Book of Genesis*,<sup>49</sup> *The Torah – A Modern Commentary*,<sup>50</sup> *Genesis in the JPS Torah Commentary Series*,<sup>51</sup> P.J. Heawood ("Beginning of the Jewish Day"),<sup>52</sup> Jacob Lauterbach ("When Does the Sabbath Begin?"),<sup>53</sup> Solomon Zeitlin,<sup>54</sup> F.J. Steed ("When does the Day Begin?"), Jacob Milgrom<sup>55</sup> and Israel Drazin.<sup>56</sup>

## 2. A Survey of the Old Testament

The most frequent Hebrew word for 'day' (*yom* יום) has always been capable of various designations (BDB, 398-401), for social, civil, pragmatic, communicative, literary and time keeping reasons. This, no doubt, stems from the practical usefulness and flexibility for having multiple ways to account for time, according to man's purposes.<sup>57</sup> Yet, when *yom* is used as designating a regularly occurring 24 hour period (a calendar day) in the Old Testament, the day always begins in the morning.

Note carefully in the following 40+ verses that days are being reckoned as beginning in the morning throughout the Old Testament in God's covenants, in common life (in all parts of Israel's history throughout their numerous circumstances), in the Levitical, moral and judicial ordinances, in persons' speech towards God, in God's words to his people, and in passages prophetic of the Christian era. W.E. Vines'

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<sup>49</sup>Cassuto (1883–1951) was a rabbi and Biblical scholar born in Italy. He was a professor at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part 1, From Adam to Noah* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961), in location.

<sup>50</sup> ed. W. Gunther Plaut (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, [1981]), 920-930.

<sup>51</sup> Nahum M. Sarna (Philadelphia: JPS, 1989), 8.

<sup>52</sup> Heawood (1861-1955) was an English, scholar (primarily a mathematician with an interest in Hebrew) at Durham University.

<sup>53</sup> Lauterbach (1873–1942) was an American Judaica scholar and author who served on the faculty of Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem Israel.

<sup>54</sup> Zeitlin (1886-1892) was a Russian born, Jewish historian, Talmudic scholar and in his time, a leading authority on the Second Temple period. "Some Stages in the Jewish Calendar" in *Solomon Zeitlin's Studies in the Early History of Judaism* (KTAV Publishing House, Inc., New York, 1973).

<sup>55</sup> Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, ed. William Foxwell Albright & David Noel Freedman, AB (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 1967.

<sup>56</sup> (1935-) "Why Women Must Start Shabbat Before Men" <http://booksnthoughts.com/why-women-must-start-shabbat-before-men/>

<sup>57</sup> To give only a few examples, *yom* is capable of denoting the whole time-span of daylight (Gen. 1:5a, 14,16, 18; 8:22; 29:7; 31:39-40; 24:18; Num. 11:32; Dt. 9:11; Jn. 11:9; 1 Sam. 30:12; Prov. 4:18; Eccl. 8:16; Amos 5:8; etc.) and the length of time for work during waking hours (Gen. 30:36; Ex. 3:18; Num. 11:31; 1 Kn. 19:4; Eze. 46:1; Jonah 3:4; note John 11:8-9 in Greek, etc.).

statement is fully justified: "In the Hebrew mind the 'day' began at the rising of the sun." (*Expository Dictionary, "To Light,"* citing 2 Sam. 23:4)<sup>58</sup>

### The Covenants (reflecting Creation):

Gen 8:22 "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and *day and night shall not cease.*"

Jer. 31:31,35 "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel... Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the *sun for a light by day*, and the ordinances of the *moon and of the stars for a light by night...*"

Jer. 33:20,25 "Thus saith the Lord; 'If ye can break *my covenant of the day*, and *my covenant of the night*, and that there should not be *day and night in their season...* If *my covenant be not with day and night*, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth..."

### In Common Life:

#### The Patriarchs

Gen. 32:24-26 "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day [עֲלוֹת הַשָּׁמֶר]... And he said, 'Let me go, for the day breaketh [עֲלָה הַשָּׁמֶר].'"

#### Outside of the Israeli people

Gen. 19:34 "And it came to pass *on the morrow*, that the firstborn said unto the younger, 'Behold, I lay *yesternight* with my father: let us make him drink wine *this night* also...'

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<sup>58</sup> Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past: The Archaeological Background of the Hebrew-Christian Religion*, vol. 2 (Princeton Univ. Press, 1969) 553: "In the Old Testament the earlier practice seems to have been to consider that the day began in the morning." Julian Morgenstern, "The Sources of the Creation Story - Gen. 1:1-2:4," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, XXXVI (1920): 176: "In early Jewish practice... it seems to have been customary to reckon the day from sunrise to sunrise, or, rather, from dawn to dawn." Morgenstern, upon less evidence than we cover in this article, said in "Supplementary Studies in The Calendars of Ancient Israel," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, X (1935): 16-17: "...Elsewhere we have presented quite a mass of evidence which establishes conclusively that the earlier practice in Israel during the biblical period was to reckon the day from sunrise to sunrise," and "That in the earliest period of Israelite sojourn in Palestine, under calendar 1, the day was reckoned from morning to morning is established by a superabundance of evidence..."

1 Sam. 5:2-4 “When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon And when they of Ashdod *arose early on the morrow*, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the Lord. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again. *And when they arose early on the morrow morning*, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord...”

1 Sam. 11:0-11 “And they said unto the messengers that came, ‘Thus shall ye say unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, *To morrow, by that time the sun be hot*, ye shall have help.’ And the messengers came and showed it to the men of Jabesh; and they were glad. Therefore the men of Jabesh said, ‘*To morrow we will come out unto you*, and ye shall do with us all that seemeth good unto you.’ And it was so *on the morrow*, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the host *in the morning watch*, and slew the Ammonites *until the heat of the day...*”

### Israel in Egypt

Ex. 5:13-14 “And the taskmasters hastened them, saying, ‘Fulfil your works, your daily tasks [דְּבַר־יָוִם], as when there was straw.’ And the officers of the children of Israel... demanded, ‘Wherefore have ye not fulfilled your task in making brick both yesterday and to day [בְּגַם־תְּמוֹל בְּגַם־הַיּוֹם], as heretofore?’”

[There seems to be little doubt that their daily tasks were measured by natural days beginning with daylight hours.]

### Israel in the wilderness

Ex. 14:8, 13-14, 19-22 “...and the children of Israel went out with an high hand. But the Egyptians pursued after them... And Moses said unto the people, ‘Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will shew to you to day [הַיּוֹם]: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day [הַיּוֹם], ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you...’

And the angel of God... came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night. And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry

land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground..."

[The Israelites left Egypt in the morning after Passover night (Ex. 12:29-31). Moses tells them in this passage that they had seen the Egyptians 'today' (when they left Egypt in the morning and now they saw their troops in the distance towards evening), and that God would show them his salvation 'today', which happened at night with the waters of the Red Sea opening up.]

Ex. 18:13 "And it came to pass *on the morrow*, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses *from the morning unto the evening*."

Num. 11:32 "And the people stood up *all that day, and all that night, and all the next day*, and they gathered the quails..."

#### Authoritative proclamations in the wilderness

Ex 19:15-16 "And he [Moses] said unto the people, 'Be ready against *the third day*: come not at your wives.' And it came to pass *on the third day in the morning*, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount..."

Ex. 32:5-6 "...and Aaron made proclamation, and said, 'To morrow [מָחָר] is a feast to the Lord.' And they rose up early on the morrow [וַיִּשְׁכְּמוּ] [מִמָּחָרֶת], and offered burnt offerings..."

#### In the period of the Judges

Judg. 6:37-38 "And it was so: for he [Gideon] *rose up early on the morrow*, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece..."

Judges 16:2 "...And they compassed him in, and laid wait for him all night [כָּל־הַלַּיְלָה] in the gate of the city, and were quiet all of the night [כָּל־הַלַּיְלָה], saying in the morning [הַבֹּקֶר], when it is day [עַד־אֹרֹר], we shall kill him."

Jud. 19:4-19 "And his father in law, the damsel's father, retained him; and he *abode with him three days*: so they did eat and drink, *and lodged there* And it came to pass *on the fourth day, when they arose early in the morning*... the damsel's father had said unto the man, 'Be content, I pray thee, and tarry all night, and let thine heart be merry.' And when the man rose up to

depart, his father in law urged him: therefore *he lodged there again* And he *arose early in the morning on the fifth day* to depart... the damsel's father, said unto him, 'Behold, now *the day draweth toward evening*, I pray you tarry all night: behold, *the day groweth to an end, lodge here*, that thine heart may be merry; and *to morrow* get you early on your way,'... And when they were by Jebus, *the day was far spent*; and the servant said unto his master, 'Come, I pray thee, and let us turn in into this city of the Jebusites, and *lodge in it...*'"

Jud. 19:25-26 "...so the man took his concubine, and brought her forth unto them; and they knew her, and abused her *all the night until the morning*: and *when the day began to spring*, they let her go. Then came the woman *in the dawning of the day*, and fell down at the door of the man's house where her lord was, *till it was light.*"

Ruth 2:17-19 "So she gleaned in the field until even [עַד־הָעֶרְבַּיִם]... and she... went into the city... And her mother in law said unto her, 'Where hast thou gleaned to day [הַיּוֹם]? and where wroughtest thou?... ' And she... said, 'The man's name with whom I wrought to day [הַיּוֹם] is Boaz.'"

[This passage reckons that evening with the previous daylight when Ruth had worked in Boaz's field.]

## In the period of the kings

### Before the division

1 Sam. 19:10-11 "...and he [Saul] smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped *that night* Saul also sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him *in the morning*: and Michal David's wife told him, saying, 'If thou save not thy life *to night, to morrow* thou shalt be slain.'"

1 Sam. 28:8,19,25 "And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman [witch] *by night*... [Samuel speaking:] '...the Lord will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and *to morrow* shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the Lord also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines... And she [the witch] brought it before Saul, and before his servants; and they did eat. Then they rose up, and went away *that night.*"

1 Sam. 30:17 "And David smote them *from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day...*"

2 Sam. 11:12 “And David said to Uriah, ‘Tarry here to day also, and to morrow [בַּיּוֹם הַיּוֹם וּמָחָר] I will let thee depart.’ So Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day, and the morrow [בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וּמָחָרָת].”

[David spoke this in the daytime to Uriah (2 Sam. 11:10-11) and yet he told him to tarry, or lodge there that ‘day’, that is, in the evening and night, which was distinguished from the ‘morrow’.]

2 Sam. 11:12-14 “And David said to Uriah, ‘Tarry here *to day* also, and *to morrow* I will let thee depart.’ So Uriah *abode* in Jerusalem *that day, and the morrow*. And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk: and *at even* he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house. And it came to pass *in the morning*... Joab... assigned Uriah unto a place [in the battle]...”

#### After the division

##### Northern Israel

2 Kings 6:29-30 “This woman said unto me, ‘Give thy son, that we may eat him *to day*, and we will eat my son *to morrow*.’ So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her *on the next day*, ‘Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son.’”

##### At Ninevah

Jonah 4:6-7 “And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. But God prepared a worm *when the morning rose the next day*, and it smote the gourd that it withered.”

#### After the Babylonian Captivity, in Israel

Ezra 3:1-6 “And when the seventh month was come... to offer burnt offerings thereon, *as it is written in the law of Moses* the man of God... and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the Lord, even burnt offerings *morning and evening*. They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is

written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required; And afterward offered the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of the Lord that were consecrated

[This evidences that the priests were to reckon and offer the sacrifices of the Feast of Tabernacles, and by inference the other Israeli holy days, the same as the morning and evening sacrifices]

and of every one that willingly offered a freewill offering unto the Lord. From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the Lord."

Neh. 4:21-22 "So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared. Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, 'Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day.'"

## In the Levitical Ordinances (God's prescriptive laws)

### The Sacrifices

Lev. 6:20 "This is the offering of Aaron and of his sons, which they shall offer unto the Lord in the day when he is anointed; the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a meat offering perpetual, half of it in the morning, and half thereof at night."

Lev. 7:15-16 "And the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten the same day that it is offered; he shall not leave any of it until the morning. But if the sacrifice of his offering be a vow, or a voluntary offering, it shall be eaten the same day that he offereth his sacrifice: and on the morrow also the remainder of it shall be eaten..."

Lev. 9:1,17 "And it came to pass on the eighth day, that Moses called Aaron and his sons, and the elders of Israel... And he brought the meat offering, and took an handful thereof, and burnt it upon the altar, beside the burnt sacrifice of the morning."

Lev. 22:29-30 "And when ye will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the Lord, offer it at your own will On the same day it shall be eaten up; ye shall leave none of it until the morrow..."

Lev. 23:15-16 "And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven



sabbaths shall be complete: *Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days...*"

Num. 28:28:3-4 "This is the offering made by fire which ye shall offer unto the Lord; two lambs of the first year without spot *day by day*, for a continual burnt offering. The one lamb shalt thou offer *in the morning*, and the other lamb shalt thou offer *at even*;"

### An Aaronic Prescription

Lev 8:35 "Therefore shall ye abide at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation *day and night seven days*, and keep the charge of the Lord..."

### Moral & Civil Statutes

Lev. 19:13 "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee *all night until the morning*."

Dt. 21:23 "His body *shall not remain all night upon the tree*, but thou shalt in any wise *bury him that day*; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God)..."

### Speaking to God

Judg. 21:2-4 "And the people came to the house of God, and abode there *till even* before God, and lifted up their voices, and wept sore; And said, 'O Lord God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be *to day* one tribe lacking in Israel? And it came to pass *on the morrow*, that the people *rose early*, and built there an altar..."

### God speaking

Ex. 10:3-4,13 "Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews... '...Behold, *tomorrow will I bring the locusts* into thy coast...'... And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the Lord brought an east wind upon the land *all that day, and all that night*; and *when it was morning*, the east wind brought the locusts."

[Note that the above was spoken to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians, within their cultural/linguistic context, were not confused about when the plague of the locusts would happen.]

Josh. 7:6, 10, 13 "And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord until *the eventide*, he and the elders of Israel, and put

dust upon their heads... And the Lord said unto Joshua... "...Up, sanctify the people, and say, 'Sanctify yourselves against *to morrow*: for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee...'"

2 Sam. 24:13-15 "So Gad [a prophet] came to David, and told him, and said unto him, 'Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be *three days' pestilence in thy land?*... So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel *from the morning even to the time appointed...*"

Jer. 6:4 "Prepare ye war against her [Jerusalem]; arise, and let us go up at noon. Woe unto us! for *the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out.*"

### Ezekiel's Temple, Eschatological of the Christian Era

Eze. 46:2, 13-15 "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...* Thou shalt *daily* prepare a burnt offering unto the Lord of a lamb of the first year without blemish: thou shalt prepare it *every morning...* Thus shall they prepare the lamb, and the meat offering, and the oil, *every morning* for a continual burnt offering."

. . .

The 'day' (*yom*) was so well understood as starting in the morning that another way to say 'tomorrow' in Biblical Hebrew is *yom machar*, literally, 'the day afterwards' (Gen. 30:33; Isa. 56:12; Prov. 27:1; BDB, 400). Likewise, as the dawn started a new day, to speak of the coming dawn is to speak of tomorrow. Thus, another defined use of *boquer* was to designate the 'morrow, the next day'.<sup>59</sup>

In addition to this, there is a vast majority of verses in the Old Testament which speak of a day-night sequence. Here are a few:

Gen. 7:4 "For yet *seven days*, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth *forty days and forty nights...*"

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<sup>59</sup> BDB, 134, citing Ex. 16:19-20; Lev. 7:15; 22:30; Num. 16:5, c.f. 12:10 & Num. 9:12; Ex. 16:23-24; 29:34; 34:25; Num. 22:4; Zeph. 3:3; 1 Sam. 9:19, c.f. 20:35; Judg. 6:31; Ex. 7:15; Josh. 7:14; Esth. 5:14; 1 Sam. 5:4; 2 Sam. 2:27; Ex. 16:7; Num. 16:5.

Josh. 1:8 “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein *day and night*...”

Here are many more verses evidencing this morning/day to evening/night sequence:

Before the nation of Israel existed:

Gen. 1:18; 7:12; 8:22; 31:39-40; Job 2:13; 3:3; 4:20; 26:10.

After the nation of Israel existed:

Ex. 10:13; 13:21-22; 18:13-14; 24:18; 29:38-39; 34:2,4 with v. 28; Lev. 8:35; Num. 9:21; 28:4; Dt. 9:9, 11, 18, 25; 10:10; 28:66-67; 1 Sam. 17:16; 19:24; 30:12; 2 Sam. 21:20; 1 Kings 8:59; 17:6; 19:8; 1 Chron. 9:33; 16:40; 2 Chron. 2:4; 6:20; 13:11; 31:3; Ezra 3:3; Neh. 1:6; 4:9; 9:12,19; Ps. 1:2; 19:2; 22:2; 32:4; 42:3,8; 55:10; 65:8; 74:16; 77:2; 88:1; 90:6; 121:6; 136:8-9; Eccl. 2:23; 8:16; 11:6; Isa. 4:5; 21:8,12; 28:19; 38:12-13; 60:11; 62:6; Jer. 9:1; 16:13; 33:20,25; 36:30; Lam. 2:18; Hos. 4:5; Jonah 1:17; Zech. 14:7.

Particularly noteworthy is Psalm 92, which in the title says, ‘A psalm or song for the Sabbath Day’. In the opening verses it reads: “It is a good thing... to show forth thy lovingkindness *in the morning*, and thy faithfulness *every night*.” (vv. 1-2)

### The Evening-to-Day Sequence

On the other hand, there are a minority<sup>60</sup> of Old Testament verses that speak of an evening-to-day sequence. Here are a few examples:

1 Sam. 25:16 (Nabal’s servant speaking of David’s men) “They were a wall unto us both *by night and day*, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep.”

1 Kn. 8:29 (Solomon praying) “That thine eyes may be open toward this house *night and day*, even toward the place of which thou hast said, ‘My name shall be there’: that Thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall make toward this place.”

In the first example, it would be very natural to speak of night first as that is when physical protection is most needed out in the open fields. The second example probably alludes to the same thing, that God would watch and protect Israel both in the night watches (when the possibility of danger is greatest) and during the day (compare Ps. 121). Later in the same prayer Solomon uses the day-night sequence, demonstrating their near interchangeability: “And let these my words, wherewith I have made

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<sup>60</sup> Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, on Gen. 1:5: “...the phrase ‘day and night’ is much more frequent than ‘night and day.’”

supplication before the Lord, be nigh unto the Lord our God *day and night...*" (1 Kn. 8:59)

One would expect in a society reckoning time morning-to-morning that there would be some use of an evening-to-day sequence in speech for contextual and rhetorical purposes, or simply due to the phrase's synonymity. Note that such an idiomatic use of 'night and day' occurs in our own culture, which does not keep calendrical days evening-to-evening.<sup>61</sup>

Another verse often used to evidence the evening to day pattern is Dt. 1:32-33, which speaks of the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day which led Israel through the wilderness: "...the Lord your God, who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in, *in fire by night*, to shew you by what way ye should go, and *in a cloud by day*." However, when this same event is referred to in numerous other places of Scripture, Scripture uses the day-to-evening sequence: Ex. 13:21-22; 40:38; Num. 14:14; 19:16,21; Neh. 9:12; Ps. 78:14; Isa. 4:5 (in a Messianic/Christian context). The reason that Dt. 1:33 puts the night first is probably because it is relating the historical narrative of Israel coming out of Egypt, and the first instance of the pillar-cloud leading and protecting Israel was at night (Ex. 14:20), whereas when Scripture later refers to the regularity of the phenomenon generally through the forty years in the wilderness, it uses the normal day-to-evening sequence. Note that when the morning came the pillar would be out in front of the camp, where Israel should go, which they followed till they came to it (Num. 9:21) and it provided protection for them at night. Hence, whether the cloud departed from their camp and went out in front of them either 'by day or by night' (Num. 9:21), the Israelites would have left in the morning or later in the daytime to follow the cloud (it is probably not likely that they would have travelled through the night). Hence, their days would have practically started in the morning.

Most of the evening-to-morning sequences are poetic and have contextual reasons for them, such as in: Ps. 30:5; 55:17 (compare 1 Chron. 23:30 which uses the day-evening sequence); 91:5; 104:19; Isa. 27:3; 34:10; Jer. 14:7. Note that these verses, where the language of night to day occurs (which are nearly all of the relevant verses in the Old Testament), are far from defining 'day' to be from evening to morning in any regularly occurring, historical fashion.

The 'day' of the prophetic 2,300 days in Dan. 8:14 reads literally in the Hebrew 'evening-mornings', or 'evening-boquer'. Hence many interpreters, understanding the term to signify evening-to-dawn (12 hours), reckon this number to be a counting of half-

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<sup>61</sup> Even the Talmud uses the phrase 'day and night', though the great majority of that work reckoned the days evening-to-evening.

days. Dan. 8:26 follows in the passage with a concluding note and uses a similar expression. However one understands the length of time being described in these 'days', this eschatological passage, as is evidenced by the numerous and bewildering, varying interpretations of commentators, is unclear and inadequate to establish any definite time-keeping paradigm on.<sup>62</sup>

It is also noteworthy that part of Babylonian society may have reckoned their days, in some contexts, evening to evening.<sup>63</sup> Daniel in Dan. 8:14,26 may have been reflecting a *de facto* practice current in his circumstances (or not).<sup>64</sup>

In a similar manner, Esther, who had been taken into the Persian court (and probably adopted some of their Persian customs), sent messengers to Mordecai saying: "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, *night or day*..." (Esth. 4:16) Esther may have been giving this message towards evening (the day having been largely spent, or would be spent by the time the addressees are told the message). Fasting is also frequently associated with night in Scripture. Hence the particular relevance of the order of time in Esth. 4:16.

As Scripture uses both the morning/day-evening/night sequence and the evening/night-morning/day sequence, numerous authors<sup>65</sup> infer that no conclusions can be made off of this data as to when the day was reckoned to begin. However, as roughly 75 passages use the morning/day-evening/night sequence and only 13 use the evening/night-morning/day sequence, all of the latter having peculiar, contextual reasons for them, it is evident that when a day was normally thought of in the Old Testament, it was reckoned from day to night.

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<sup>62</sup> For a discussion of many of the views on the passage, see S. J. Schwantes, "Ereb Boqer of Dan. 8:14 Re-Examined," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* XVI, 2 (Autumn 1978) 375-386. The Septuagint, the various early translations of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek, translated the Hebrew term in Dan. 8:14, 'evening-boqer', into the Greek term, 'night-days' (νυκθήμερον), which many commentators follow, reckoning these 'days' as full and regular 24-hour days starting in the evening. However, this was an inaccurate translation by the Septuagint; see Keil & Delitzsch, *Commentary*, on Gen. 1:5. The only place in which this Greek term is used in the New Testament is in 2 Cor. 11:25, where it is specific to that limited context of being shipwrecked over-night and is not indicative of the counting of regular days (despite some writers' attempt to make this term normative for reckoning days).

<sup>63</sup> There is mixed evidence with mixed pronouncements on this in the secondary literature; numerous sources say that the Babylonians kept their days sunrise to sunrise. It is possible that the discrepancy is due to parts of Babylonian society keeping days from different times, with different civil and ecclesiastical reckonings.

<sup>64</sup> It is possible this exceptional usage of the Holy Spirit is wholly of a theological or eschatological import.

<sup>65</sup> E.g. Price; compare Schwantes, 382-5.

Tellingly, all of the instances given in BDB for 'day' (*yom*, 398) being defined as evening-to-morning are in Gen. 1-2:4<sup>66</sup> and in the 4th Commandment, about the Sabbath (Ex. 20:11; 32:17, which verses say nothing about the Sabbath being evening to evening). This lexicon does not think that any verses outside of Gen. 1 and the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment in the Old Testament evidence a day as being defined from evening-to-morning; we agree.

### 3. Gathering of Manna & Keeping the Sabbath

Rather than the Sabbath being new, something having to be explained in detail in order to preface the story about the Israelites gathering manna in the wilderness (Ex. 16:4-30), it is mentioned (before the giving of the Ten Commandments in Ex. 20) without further explanation (16:23, 25-26) as something that would have been understood, it already having been known of and possibly practiced to some extent.

The Lord tells the Israelites that they were to 'gather a certain rate [of manna] every day' (v. 4). The manna appeared in the morning (v. 14) and melted later 'when the sun waxed hot' (v. 21). If the gathered manna was kept till the following morning it would rot (v. 20). Thus, the Israelites gathered the manna every morning (v. 21). On the sixth day, the Israelites were to gather twice as much manna in preparation for the Sabbath (v. 5). Thus, 'and it came to pass, that on the sixth day [in the morning] they gathered twice as much bread.' (v. 22)

Moses then said, after the work in the morning on the sixth day: "Tomorrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord: bake that which ye will bake today... and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning." The baking would have been done on the latter half of the natural day, and 'tomorrow' correlated, not with the evening of that same day, but with the following morning.

After the morning of the Sabbath had come (v. 24), Moses said, "Eat that *today*; for *today* is a sabbath unto the Lord: *today* ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none.' (v. 25) As no more manna would come until the following morning, the people eating the manna 'today' must have had reference to that morning followed by the evening when they would further eat. Moses was naturally announcing these prescriptions of the Lord at the beginning of the Sabbath in the morning.

The Lord speaks of these prescriptions as 'my commandments and my laws,' (v. 28) attributing to them not simply a descriptive, but a normative status for the keeping of the Sabbath: "For the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, therefore He giveth you on

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<sup>66</sup> The lexicon, having multiple editors, is not always consistent with itself.

the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day.”

The manna of the sixth day would have provided enough food for the Israelites for the two days of that morning and evening and the morning and the evening of the following day, the Sabbath (until more manna could have been gathered in the morning of the first day of the week). The prohibition for no man to go out of his place on the seventh day, and the people’s resting thereon, naturally applied to the Sabbath morning followed by the evening, till they would gather manna again for food on the morning of the first day.

This defined pattern for keeping the sabbath at the beginning of God’s dealings with the nation of Israel in her youth would have served as the prescriptive foundation for the Israelites keeping the Sabbath through the rest of her history, even after they left the wilderness and the manna ceased.

#### 4. The Fourth Commandment

The moral, Fourth Commandment, “Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy,” (Ex. 20:8-11) does not explicitly state when the Sabbath begins, as there was no need for this, it already having been clearly defined in Gen. 2:2-4 and confirmed recently by prescription and practice in Ex. 16.

Some persons,<sup>67</sup> while holding that Genesis 1 teaches a morning-to-morning reckoning of the Sabbath, yet believe that the Jews were to keep the Sabbath from evening-to-evening under the Mosaic legislation (deriving this usually from the regulations respecting the Passover and the Day of Atonement). However, the following reasons go against such a change in the economy of God:

- (1) The Ten Commandments were given before the legislation in Leviticus respecting the Day of Atonement.
- (2) The prescriptions concerning the Passover and the Day of Atonement are not said to apply to the weekly Sabbath, and hence don’t.
- (3) There are no further prescriptions in the Mosaic legislation explicitly delineating the beginning or ending of the Sabbath.
- (4) Hence, the Fourth Commandment, as it was originally given, must be understood from the precedents which came before it, and, according to the understanding of the original hearers, not by anything that came after it.

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<sup>67</sup> E.g. Gentry, *Hath God Said?*, 47. There are numerous others.

(5) The Sabbath had been prescribed and exemplified in Ex. 16 immediately before this and was reckoned and kept by the Israelites from morning-to-morning.

(6) Given the lack of any distinguishing feature for the beginning of the Sabbath in the Fourth Commandment, the bare command must have naturally necessitated keeping the Sabbath Day according to how any other day of the week was reckoned. As is clear from numerous examples before this in Genesis and Exodus, including some verses immediately leading up to this event (Ex. 10:3-4,13; 18:13; 19:15-16), days were reckoned from morning-to-morning.

If the beginning of the Sabbath was not changed with the giving of the Ten Commandments, there is no further plausible place in the Old Testament where it would have changed.

## 5. The Passover & the Day of Atonement

### Festivities from Evening-to-Evening

The festivities of the Passover, the subsequent Week of Unleavened Bread and the Day of Atonement were celebrated from evening to evening. Thus, the Week of Unleavened Bread (with the Passover constituting the first night of it), where the Israelites were not to eat any leavened bread for seven, twenty-four hour periods, was to be kept from the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month to the evening of the twenty first day of the month (Ex. 12:18). Likewise, the resting and fasting of the Day of Atonement, which was prescribed to be kept for the twenty-four hour period from the evening of the ninth day of the tenth month to the evening of the tenth day of that same month (Lev. 23:32), seems to delineate the beginning and end limits of that festival.

However, there is no grounds for the inference that the start and end times of the festivities of these festivals applied to the weekly Sabbath, as some persons conclude.<sup>68</sup> On the contrary, the very need to specify in detail the special timing of the beginning and ending of these holy festivals (especially when no other holy-days are said to begin in the evening) evidences the uniqueness of the timing of these festivals contrary to the norm and what would have been assumed for the other holy-days. Significantly, the

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<sup>68</sup> The term 'sabbath' at the end of Lev. 23:32, "from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath," clearly does not refer to the weekly Sabbath but to the Day of Atonement, the Day of Atonement being referred to in the same verse previously as a 'sabbath of rest'. It is true that the annual holy days were in general called 'sabbaths' (Lev. 23:24,32,38-39). While the weekly Sabbath is mentioned at the beginning of Lev. 23 (v. 3), if the pertinent phrase in 23:32 about keeping the 'sabbath' from evening-to-evening was meant to apply to all the sabbaths of the chapter, the plural 'sabbaths' would have been used instead of the singular 'sabbath'.



sacrifice of the Passover is specifically said to be held in the evening in Dt. 16:1-2 for the historical reason that “the Lord thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night.” The fasting before the Day of Atonement likely started in the evening because the darkness of evening was correspondent to the affliction of fasting (Lev. 23:27,29,32) which was to occur.<sup>69</sup>

### The Day of Atonement & the Passover were Counted by Natural Days

While the holy-time and festivities of the Day of Atonement, the Passover and the Week of Unleavened Bread were celebrated and kept from evening to evening, yet the days themselves were reckoned according to natural days by God’s prescribed ecclesiastical calendar for Israel.

The Day of Atonement was stated to be the calendar day of the tenth day of the seventh month (Lev. 23:27). It is clear that the calendar days, by which the holiday was normally reckoned (Lev. 23:27; 25:9; Num. 29:7), were equivalent to natural days in the very prescription that the fasting begin on “the ninth day of the month at even.” (Lev. 23:32)<sup>70</sup> If the ninth day began at evening, the specification ‘at even’ would be unnecessary and superfluous. Rather, the phrase implies that once the ninth day was come, one was to wait till evening to begin fasting. It also implies that the tenth day started on the following morning (which was more formally the Day of Atonement, Lev. 23:27-28). Hence the fasting the evening before the Day of Atonement was a certain time of preparation to the following day and was not counted as the tenth day of the month.

Regarding the Passover, note particularly that the text says that the Jews were commanded to kill the Passover lamb on the evening of the 14th day of the first month (Ex. 12:6,18). The verses do not say that the day started in the evening, but that the passover lamb was to be killed in the evening on that day. The phrase in Ex. 12:18 suggests that Israel’s calendar reckoned by natural days, and that when the natural day came, then at even of that same day they were to begin their festivity: “In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall...” That the specification ‘at even’ was needed, implies that this as something peculiar and out of the ordinary. If

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<sup>69</sup> Heawood, “Beginning of the Jewish Day,” 395: “...it is sometimes ignored that this [evening-to-evening observance] has nothing to do with the weekly Sabbath, but is concerned with the very special ceremonies and restrictions of the Great Day of Atonement, *Tisri* 9-10. If it is lightly said, ‘no doubt the weekly Sabbath followed the same rule,’ it must be remembered that the weekly Sabbath was a joyful festival, while the other was the most penitential occasion in the whole year – a day for a man to afflict his soul...” Passover evening was likewise characterized by affliction and difficult circumstances, especially in the eating of bitter herbs (Ex. 12:8).

<sup>70</sup> On the confounding of the later Talmudic rabbis over this verse, see below.

the days were regularly reckoned at even, no specification would be needed, or the text may alternately have said: 'at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan...'

### The Different Reckonings of the Passover & the Week of Unleavened Bread

It appears to be due to the fact that the first public assembly of the Week of Unleavened Bread happened in the daytime of its first natural day<sup>71</sup> (as counted by the Levitical, ecclesiastical calendar, Lev. 23:7,27) and yet its holy festivities commenced the evening before, that Scripture variously counts the beginning of Passover Day and the Week of Unleavened Bread<sup>72</sup> throughout its pages.<sup>73</sup> In confirmation of our thesis, the various calendrical countings of the day of Passover and the Week of Unleavened Bread in Scripture always begin on the natural day, and not in the evening.

The Passover day, upon which the sacrifice in the evening occurred, was reckoned to be the 14<sup>th</sup> of the first month (not the 15<sup>th</sup>), which was to be back-to-back with the first day of the Week of Unleavened Bread, regularly spoken of as starting on the 15<sup>th</sup> (according to these eight scriptures: Ex. 12:6,18; Lev. 23:5-6; Num. 9:5,11; 28:16-25; Josh. 5:10; 2 Chron. 35:1,10,16; Ezra 6:19 & Eze. 45:21). This understanding is confirmed by Num. 33:3, "And they departed from Rameses in the first month, *on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the morrow after the passover* the children of Israel went out with an high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians."

In differentiation from these nine Scriptures, Ex. 12:17-20 clearly counts the first calendrical day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread to be on the 14<sup>th</sup>.<sup>74</sup> Likely due to this, Philo, the prominent first century Jew, and the gospel writers Matthew, Mark and Luke speak of the *natural day* of the slaying of the Passover lamb as being 'the first day of Unleavened Bread'<sup>75</sup> (Mt. 26:17,20; Mk. 14:1,12,17; Lk. 22:1,7,14). The first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread was counted as having already come (Mk. 14:12), though the disciples would not eat the Passover meal unto later that evening (Mk. 14:17). Though

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<sup>71</sup> This was true for the Day of Atonement as well.

<sup>72</sup> This is not the case for the other Israeli festivals or the weekly Sabbath, demonstrating that the peculiarities of the Passover and the Week of Unleavened Bread are not evidence that these other festivals (other than the Day of Atonement) began in the evening or were counted as doing so.

<sup>73</sup> This is very important as liberal scholarship has made up theories of multiple, competing, calendars used by Israel based off of the difference of language and counting in the Old Testament verses that will be discussed. However, as will be shown, the verses and natural language used in them is harmonious. As many liberal scholars do not quote some of the verses about to be cited, and hence seem to be unaware of them, their complicated theories of conflicting data are due to their ignorance of the Scriptures. Mt. 22:29, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures!"

<sup>74</sup> This conclusion is inevitable from doing the math on the numbers in the passage.

<sup>75</sup> See the subsection below on Philo for documentation.

the Passover started in the evening, Jesus' disciples (interpreting Scripture for us) counted the festival day to have started with the natural day.

As the Passover rites prominently began the Week of Unleavened Bread and as Passover Day is sometimes reckoned as the first day of the Week of Unleavened Bread, so the whole Week of Unleavened Bread is sometimes designated as 'The Passover'. Dt. 16:2-3 is the first time this language occurs in Scripture, it likely being foundational to the later Scriptural occurrences of this language. The passage speaks of eating unleavened bread with the 'passover' for seven days, as if the passover sacrifice was to be eaten for seven days (Keil & Delitzsch, in loc.). Yet the Passover sacrifice was only eaten the first night and was not to remain till the morning (*boquer*, 16:4, no doubt, because the morning reckoned a new day and hence after that was no longer the *day* of Passover). Eating the 'passover' for a week in this passage, rather, refers to the Israelites eating the special, festive, animal sacrifices which were to be offered on the Temple's altar each day of that week (Lev. 23:8).

In the same strain, while Passover night only involved sacrificing lambs, yet 2 Chron. 35:8 calls the sacrificial offerings of 'cattle' and 'oxen' during the Week of Unleavened Bread, the 'Passover' (2 Chron. 35:8,16,18), 'Passover' signifying that whole week-period. Eze. 45:21 likewise speaks of the 'Passover' as 'a feast of seven days'. These peculiar Old Testament precedents of language formed the grounds for the later Jews using the same terminology of the Passover lasting a week in Jn. 18:28; 19:14,31 and in Acts 12:3-4 (*pascha* in the Greek).<sup>76</sup> This further confirms why Passover Day, reckoned according to a natural day, was called the first day of Unleavened Bread by the synoptic Gospel writers in Mt. 26:17,20; Mk. 14:1,12,17; Lk. 22:1,7,14.<sup>77</sup>

The conclusion that follows from this evidence is that, though the holy-time and festivities of the Passover began in the evening, yet Passover Day and the Week of Unleavened Bread, in their various reckonings, were always counted by the Biblical calendar and testimony according to natural days, as were all of Israel's holy-days. Hence it is no surprise that the weekly Sabbath was reckoned according to natural days as well.

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<sup>76</sup> On Jn. 18:28; 19:14,31 and the Talmud, see Alfred Edersheim, "Did the Lord Institute his Supper on the Paschal Night?" in *The Temple, its Ministry and Services as they were at the Time of Jesus Christ*, (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1874) and *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah: New Updated Edition*, (Hendrickson, 1993), on Jn. 18:28 and on 19:14,31; Norval Geldenhuys, "Excursus: the Day and Date of the Crucifixion" in *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 661-666.

<sup>77</sup> This point is also very important for establishing that multiple calendars were not being used by the gospel writers, as will be demonstrated (with great relevance to our thesis) in the New Testament section below.

## 6. The Closing of the Gates for the Sabbath in Nehemiah

Nehemiah closing the gates of Jerusalem at evening before the Sabbath (Neh. 13:15-23) is often considered a strong example in the Old Testament of the Sabbath being kept evening to evening (v. 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.

However, it was customary in the land of Israel for walled cities to shut their gates at night for protection. Josh. 2:5 states regarding Jericho: "and it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark..." See also Eze. 46:2 and Isa. 60:11, the latter speaking of an extraordinary safety, given by the blessing of God, for removing the need for shutting city gates. Thus the gates of Jerusalem would have likely been shut every night of the week. The issue would not have been whether the gates were to be shut at night, but whether the gates should be shut during the daytime of the Sabbath (when traders brought great burdens of wares through the gates in order to trade and do commerce; see vv. 15-16, 19).

The common evening-to-evening view of this passage is that the traders arrived at the city around sunset looking to set up shop the evening before in order to be ready to sell during the daytime on the Sabbath Day. However, the traders would have known the gates would close at sunset and they wouldn't have thought it desirable to set up shop through the night outside of the city gates where the danger was greatest (with nothing to prevent robbers from taking all of their wares). If they had to come set up shop, they would have planned to reach the city before the gates closed in the evening and set up shop in the streets of the city, where it was safe.

Note the time sequence in v. 19: when 'the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark' (which would have happened at sunset), it was yet 'before the Sabbath'.<sup>78</sup> If the Sabbath started in the morning, it would be natural for Nehemiah to give his direction to not open the gates for the Sabbath Day the evening before when the gates were being shut: "I commanded that the gates should be shut and charged that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath." (v. 19)

Observe also that Nehemiah's contention of words was not with the merchants themselves, but with the nobles of Judah (v. 17), who exercised jurisdiction in the city. It would have been unwise for Nehemiah as a civil governor, willing to use physical force, to make his contention with the merchants as they were seeking to come into the city.

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<sup>78</sup> John Cotton replies (97) that the Hebrew word here translated 'before' could also mean 'in the presence of' the Sabbath. This is true enough, though the other considerations here given still apply.

Rather, Nehemiah preempts them by commanding the gates to remain shut for the Sabbath day the night before. Thus, the merchants would have showed up to seek entrance into the city early Sabbath morning<sup>79</sup> (it not taking more than a few hours to set up shop for many of them), but instead, not being able to enter, they 'lodged without Jerusalem' (v. 20) for the day, not having anywhere to go.

As the gates would have been shut on the evening of the sixth day, the morning and evening of the seventh day, and till the dawn of the first day (for approximately 36 hours),<sup>80</sup> this passage is at best too ambiguous to warrant a precedent for an evening-to-evening Sabbath.<sup>81</sup>

### Conclusion of the Old Testament Evidence

To succinctly summarize some of our findings: The regular days of Creation Week in Genesis 1 must be understood as being from dawn until dawn, due to the linguistic and contextual evidence which has been presented. *Boquer*, or 'morning,' commonly refers specifically to the dawn, never means a twelve-hour period of daylight in the scriptures and is distinguished from *yom*, or 'day', in Gen. 1:5 which does refer there to a half-day of daylight. *Ereb*, or 'evening', likewise never refers in prose to the whole period of the night.

While the idiomatic phrase 'night and day' used elsewhere in the Old Testament may mean a twenty-four hour period (it always having specific contextual reasons for being in that order), the phrase 'day and night' is much more frequent. Despite what one might have expected, a similar construction of 'evening' and 'morning' only occurs

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<sup>79</sup> There were probably numerous, close, suburb villages and cities in the area of Jerusalem they could have stayed the night in, just as there were in Jesus' day.

<sup>80</sup> Civilly closing businesses for a period of the day before and after the Sabbath has occurred in Church history. In the Middle Ages, "Kings and councils, in a number of instances, decreed that the weekly rest should extend from noontide of Saturday to Monday morning." James Gilfillan, *The Sabbath Viewed in the Light of Reason, Revelation, and History, with Sketches of its Literature* (New York: American Tract Society & New York Sabbath Committee, 1862) gives examples on pp. 398-400. Cox cites an example in Westminster era Scotland in 1650. Robert Cox, *The Literature of the Sabbath Question*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Maclachlan and Stewart, 1865) 471. Needless to say these examples in Church history do not support the practice of an evening-to-evening Sabbath as some have claimed, especially as the civil prohibition lasted past Sunday evening. In contrast to such a protection upon the preparatory hours leading up to the Sabbath, the following was recorded of a later generation in Scotland under a declining practice of the Sabbath: "In 1763... [for] those who attended the theatre... Saturday night was thought the most improper [day] in the week for going to the play. In 1783... The most crowded houses were always on Saturday night... The galleries never failed to applaud what they formerly would have hissed, as improper in sentiment and decorum." Gilfillan, *Sabbath Viewed in the Light*, 509-510.

<sup>81</sup> Talmon argues from parallel, extra-Biblical Hebrew that the Hebrew of Neh. 13:19 is consistent with Nehemiah closing the gates at anytime on the day before the Sabbath and reopening them anytime the day after the Sabbath. "Reckoning the Sabbath," 17 ff.

in one other passage in the Old Testament (Dan. 8:14,26) where it is too unclear to make definite conclusions on.

The phrase, 'and there was evening and there was dawn' in Gen. 1, having the style and sequence of a historical narrative, culminates the natural flow of thought through the days and events of Creation Week, ending each day with dawn and commencing the next day. If one goes beyond a superficial reading of Gen. 1:5 in English, the meaning of this phrase and the reckoning of the First Sabbath, being the paradigm for all later Sabbaths (Ex. 20:8,11), is clear, bringing a surprising harmony to the plain, literal and natural flow of this opening passage of Genesis. This view of Gen. 1-2:4 has been held by many respectable figures amongst the Jews, the Church and scholars throughout history.

*Yom*, the normal Hebrew word for day, and related terms, are used upwards of forty times in the Old Testament, in every period of Israel's history (pre-exile and post-exile), always reckoning the start of the day from morning (this even being clear in the English).<sup>82</sup> The beginning of the Sabbath in the Fourth Commandment, at face-value, must have been understood to refer back to Creation, in consistency with how they kept natural days and Israel was keeping the Sabbath from Ex. 16: from morning to morning.

The *Biblical* ecclesiastical calendar and official, Temple, sacrificial system (found in Leviticus, etc.) always reckons days according to the morning. This was held forth prominently in the daily, morning and evening sacrifices (2 Chron. 13:11). Though the holy-time and festivities of the Passover, Week of Unleavened Bread and Day of Atonement were kept from evening-to-evening (which in no way reflected upon the weekly Sabbath), yet these days, in their various reckonings, were always counted according to natural days in both the Old Testament and the synoptic Gospels. Neh. 13 and the closing of the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath is at best too unclear to warrant an evening-to-evening Sabbath, and lends itself to the morning reckoning.

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<sup>82</sup> Cotton argues (96) that the fulfillment in Eze. 33:21-22 of the prophecy in Eze. 24:25-27 entails a 'day' (not the Sabbath) as being reckoned from the evening. Cleaver, though, fully answers this (195-197) in the following three points: (1) "...the word 'this day'... is too much straitened, and has not due extent yielded unto it: For it is many times in a Scripture taken for a larger season: as in Isa. 26:1... and in the verse fore-going [Eze. 24:25]... [Francis] Junius... would not have 'the day' to be restrained to 24 hours, but expounds it in this manner... 'At what season, or in what year.' (2) ...either we must take 'that day' in so large a sense, or else we shall be driven to this strait, that Jerusalem was spoiled, and the messenger escaped, and the news brought to Ezekiel to Babel within the compass of one natural day, as... [the] 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> verses of the 24<sup>th</sup> chapter do intend. And the distance betwixt those two cities is observed... to be 680 miles. (3) ...though the prophet's mouth were opened in the evening, yet it was not opened to him which had escaped before the morning; and therein consists the prediction of the 'day': 'in that day shall thy mouth be opened unto him that is escaped.'"

No hint of an evening-to-evening Sabbath or a midnight-to-midnight Sabbath has been found in the Old Testament.<sup>83</sup> The Older Testament clearly, consistently and overwhelmingly, in a mass of unmistakable evidence throughout its pages, teaches that the Sabbath begins and ends with dawn.

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<sup>83</sup> "It is certainly significant that neither the diverse Biblical legal corpus nor the narrative writings contain an ordinance to the effect that the 'day' should be counted from nightfall. Most important... is the total absence of an explicit statement that the Sabbath is to be hallowed from Friday night to Saturday night." Talmon, "Reckoning the Sabbath," 12.

## II. Calendar Issues & the Later Jewish Practice<sup>84</sup>

### 1. Calendar Issues

Much of Israel appears to have kept a lunar calendar (basing the months off of the cycles of the moon) from sometime during the inter-Testamental period, and possibly from before that during the Old Testament.<sup>85</sup> Using a lunar calendar is often taken as incontrovertible proof that Israel reckoned her days from evening-to-evening.

Some works, however, believe that Israel kept a solar calendar before the Babylonian captivity (c. 586 B.C.).<sup>86</sup> *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, for instance, says:

It thus seems plain that the Jewish year was not a simple lunar year; for while the Jewish festivals no doubt were fixed on given days of lunar months, they also had a dependence on the position of the sun. Thus the Passover Feast was to be celebrated in the month of the wheat harvest אֲבִיב [Abib, Ex. 13:4; 23:15; 34:18; Dt. 16:1], and the Feast

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<sup>84</sup> The numerous primary and secondary sources and extra-Biblical literature quoted and cited both above and below are not all consistent with each other or even with the Biblical evidence as we have interpreted it. The citations given here are intended as helpful, not as Gospel-Truth. God's Word alone is infallible (2 Pet. 1:19-21).

<sup>85</sup> See *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, ed. John McClintock & James Strong (NY: Haper and Brothers, 1880), "Month"; Ex. 12; 13:4; Num. 10:10; 28:11-15; Dt. 16:1; 1 Sam. 20:5,18; 2 Kings 4:23; 1 Chron. 23:31; Ezra 3:5; Neh. 10:33; Ps. 81:3; 104:19; Isa. 1:14; 66:23; Hos. 2:11; Amos 8:5; Col. 2:16; etc.

<sup>86</sup> Compare the detailed discussions in *Cyclopedia*, "Month" & "Year"; *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia* allows for the possibility of an early solar year. "Moon, Hebrew Conceptions of" [http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/encyc07/Page\\_492.html](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/encyc07/Page_492.html) Scholars which believed that Israel first used a solar calendar include Morgenstern ("Sources of the Creation Story" & "Supplementary Studies"), Solomon Zeitlin ("The Second Day of the Holidays in the Diaspora", "The Book of Jubilees" & "Some Stages in the Jewish Calendar") and Shemaryahu Talmon ("Reckoning the Sabbath"). Others include: Bottcher, Credner and Seyffarth. *Cyclopedia*, "Time". *The New Bible Dictionary*, ed. J.D. Douglas, says, "While in Egypt the Hebrews may have conformed to the solar year of 12 months, each of 30 days + 5 additional days, i.e. 365 days (Herodotus, ii. 4)..." (Eerdmans, 1962), "Calendar". Professor Rachel Elijor of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem has asserted the solar year in the news article by Abraham Rabinovich, "From the Sun to the Moon" in *The Jerusalem Post* (May 7, 2009) <http://www.jpost.com/Magazine/Features/From-the-sun-to-the-moon> Those who believe that Israel kept a purely lunar year during Biblical times are at a loss to explain the obvious: "No exact information is available to explain how the Jews originally adjusted their inaccurate lunar calendar to synchronize with the actual solar year." *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Walter Elwell, vol. 1 (Baker, 1988), "Calendars, Ancient and Modern". No allusion to an intercalary, 13<sup>th</sup> month is found in Scripture (see Scripture assert 12 months in the year: 1 Kn. 4:7; 1 Chron. 27:1-15), though the Talmudical rabbis are known to have added it. Without such an intercalary month, the months would quickly no longer reflect the same seasons, contra the Biblical evidence. Note the solar characteristics of the 150 days (five solar months) of the flood account in Gen. 7:24; 8:3. Calendar keeping being so important to the ancients for practical reasons and yet, as the most natural divisions for time, days, months and years don't completely line up with each other, Geminus of Rhodes (fl. 1st century B.C.) said (8.7) that the ancients tried "to conduct their years in accordance with the sun, their days and months in accordance with the moon." *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. N.G.L. Hammond & H.H. Scullard, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford, 1979), "Time-Reckoning," 1075.



of Tabernacles, also called *חג האסיף*, took place in the fall. Sometimes the feasts are mentioned as taking place in certain lunar months (Lev. xxiii; Num. xxviii, xxix), and at other times they are fixed in accordance with certain crops; that is, with the solar year.<sup>87</sup>

If Israel did keep a lunar calendar from the beginning of her history, this does not obviously imply that Israel reckoned days evening-to-evening. The *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia* states, "That this basis of reckoning [by the lunar calendar] determined the custom of counting the day, not from morning till morning or midnight to midnight, but from evening to evening cannot be proved." ("Moon, Hebrew Conceptions of," 492)<sup>88</sup>

One practical reason for this is that the observation of the phase of the moon<sup>89</sup> is usually significantly later in the night than sunset or even twilight. By the time the observation of the moon has been confirmed, the start of the evening has often long since passed. Hence the new day or new month may have to be reckoned to begin sometime the following 'day'. The "New Moon" article in McClintock & Strong's *Cyclopedia* summarizes the Talmud as saying: "When the moon was not visible on account of clouds, and in the five months when the watchmen were not sent out, the month was considered to *commence on the morning of the day which followed the 30th.*"<sup>90</sup>

While this Talmudic practice of at least sometimes reckoning days from the morning on a lunar calendar may or may not have extended back to the New Testament period, the record of the Old Testament data from Israel's earliest history is consistent with this phenomenon. Though Israel may have used a semi-lunar calendar from its earliest history, this is still consistent with all of the previously cited Scriptural documentation reckoning Israel's days morning-to-morning (including all of Israel's official counting of calendar days for her festivals and sacrificial system).

A natural explanation of this phenomenon of reckoning days from the morning on a lunar calendar is that the most obvious universal indicator for keeping months is by reckoning them according to the phase of the moon (especially in a pre-modern, rural, pastoral and agrarian society). Whereas, the rising of the sun is the most obvious universal, natural, indicator of the alternation of days.

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<sup>87</sup> "Calendar, the History of" <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/3920-calendar-history-of>

<sup>88</sup> For example, instance: "...the ancient Egyptian lunar calendar, in which the day extended from dawn to dawn." Talmon, "Reckoning the Sabbath" 11; see there for the references.

<sup>89</sup> Which is dependent on geographical location, the time of year, the phase of the moon, the weather, altitude, light pollution, etc.

<sup>90</sup> Emphasis added.

This paradigm is evidenced in Old Testament history. The passage about David corresponding with Jonathan to elude Saul (1 Sam. 20:5,18-19,24,34-35) combines celebrating the new moon with days beginning in the morning:

“And David said unto Jonathan, ‘Behold, *tomorrow is the new moon*, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field *unto the third day at even...*’ ...Then Jonathan said to David, ‘*Tomorrow is the new moon*: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty. And when thou hast stayed *three days*, then thou shalt go down quickly...’...

So David hid himself in the field: and *when the new moon was come*, the king sat him down to eat meat... Nevertheless Saul spake not any thing *that day*...

And it came to pass *on the morrow, which was the second day of the month*, that David’s place was empty, and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, ‘Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, *neither yesterday, nor today?*’ ... So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and *did eat no meat the second day of the month*: for he was grieved for David because his father had done him shame. And *it came to pass in the morning* [on the third day], that Jonathan went out into the field...”

Thus, Israel at times in her history having kept a semi-lunar calendar,<sup>91</sup> is no proof that she kept her days evening-to-evening, but rather is consistent with a morning reckoning.

### Multiple Israeli Calendars?

In light of the evidence of Old Testament Scriptures reckoning days from the morning, in conjunction with other Old Testament Scriptures (lesser in frequency) of an evening-to-morning sequence,<sup>92</sup> the hypothesis has been put forward that there were two (or more) different calendars in use in Israel by competing sects at variance with each other through the Old Testament.<sup>93</sup> As this prevalent perspective in modern Old

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<sup>91</sup> “In all likelihood the early Israelites followed a Canaanite calendar, which may at one time have been entirely solar... Calendars combining both solar and lunar reckoning were, however, widely used throughout the Near East even in very ancient times, and the Hebrews probably always had a lunar-solar calendar. The prestige of the Babylonian system certainly must have had effects even in pre-exilic Israel. A lunar-solar calendar was adopted by the first Babylonian dynasty (ca. 1839-1550 B.C.), and became effective in Assyria during the first millennium B.C.” See Buttrick, *Interpreter’s Dictionary*, 484-5 ff. for a helpful discussion.

<sup>92</sup> Along with language used about the Passover in Dt. 16:4; Eze. 45:21; etc., all of which has been examined above.

<sup>93</sup> As is proposed in the articles of E. Konig, J. Morgenstern and others following. Morgenstern, “Supplementary Studies,” 1-2. G. Barrois and G. von Rad are cited for this view by Stroes, who gives a helpful survey and summary of the different views in “Does the Day Begin”, 460-1.

Testament scholarship is based on liberal presuppositions, pitting Scripture against itself, it will not be dealt with here.<sup>94</sup>

Other works on Israel's chronology (which are consistent with evangelical theology) posit that Israel, through her history from the earliest time in Ex. 12 and following, had different civil and ecclesiastical calendars<sup>95</sup> (as is the current practice in modern Israel today). As far as reckoning when the new year began in the Old Testamental period, this is a possibility.<sup>96</sup> However, that days on the civil calendar were reckoned according to natural days from sunrise and days in the ecclesiastical calendar were reckoned from the evening, does not appear to have been the case for the reasons that:

- (1) The evidence and analysis presented above and below show that there is no legitimate ground for an evening-to-evening reckoning of days in Scripture at all, all such Scriptural evidence being consistent with the morning-reckoning;
- (2) The Biblical, Israeli, ecclesiastical calendar (especially in Lev. 23) reckoned according to natural days;
- (3) Such a prevalent evening-reckoning, as is proposed, would be expected to evidence itself commonly in the colloquial language contained in the sizable literature of Scripture (but it doesn't);
- (4) Even during the time of Christ, the Temple kept the ecclesiastical calendar according to natural days, in align with the Levitical statutes.<sup>97</sup>

The Jewish scholar and professor at Hebrew University in Jerusalem in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Umberto Cassuto, concluded: "It will thus be seen that throughout the

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<sup>94</sup> This competing multi-calendar paradigm apparently stemmed from liberals' recognition in the late-1800's and early-1900's that there were competing calendars being kept in inter-Testamental Judaism (which we affirm); they then pushed this onto the earlier Biblical Old Testament data through the liberal, Wellhausen based, J.E.P.D., documentary hypothesis (Morgenstern, "Supplementary Studies," 1-8). The ground we have already covered shows that there is no legitimate ground for an evening-to-evening reckoning of days, which is sufficient to answer the theory. A main, foundational launching point for liberals feeling the need to make up multiple calendars during the Old Testament period is the difference of language used about the reckoning of the Passover in various Old Testament texts (see Morgenstern's articles), which varying language we have shown above to be consistent with itself and natural.

<sup>95</sup> Bacchiocchi, "Reckoning of the Day". Roger Beckwith held to this, per Bacchiocchi. Also G. Barrois, *Manuel d'Archéologie Biblique*, vol. 2 (1953) 183; G. Von Rad, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "hemera", per the Biblical Research Institute Committee (Seventh Day Adventist), "When Does the Sabbath Begin?"

<https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/sabbathbegin.pdf>

<sup>96</sup> Though it is by no means certain; see the discussion in *Cyclopedia*, "Time".

<sup>97</sup> Per the Temple counting the hours of the day from dawn in the New Testament and per the Talmud and multiple other sources below, though this must be qualified by the evidence from Josephus.

Bible there obtains only one system of computing time: the day is considered to begin in the morning." (49)

## 2. The Later Jewish Practice

Post-Old-Testament Jewish views and practices regarding when the Sabbath begins have been mixed. On the one hand, the dominant perspective of the rabbis in the Talmuds (collected after the time of Christ between approximately the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.) is that of reckoning days and keeping the Sabbath evening-to-evening.<sup>98</sup> Lauterbach, a Jewish scholar, provides the fullest survey of the development of the Jewish practice we have met with in "When Does the Sabbath Begin?" Starting at the beginning of Israeli history, however, he writes (446):

There can be no doubt that in pre-exilic times [before the Babylonian Captivity, c. 586 B.C.] the Israelites reckoned the day from morning to morning... The very description of the extent of the day in the Biblical account of creation as given in Gen. 1:5 presupposes such a system of reckoning the day... This passage was misunderstood by the Talmud.

Numerous works<sup>99</sup> say that the evening-to-evening practice was probably of a late origin:

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<sup>98</sup> "The Halakhic 'day' of twenty-four hours usually begins at nighttime with the appearance of three medium-sized stars... hence, according to the Talmud, the day follows the night rather than the other way round." Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, *The Talmud - The Steinsaltz Edition* (The Israel Institute for Talmudic Publications, Random House, Inc., New York, 1989), p.281. For a marshalling of the Talmudic evidence for an evening-Sabbath, see Solomon Zeitlin, "The Beginning of the Jewish Day during the Second Commonwealth," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series, 36, 4 (Apr., 1946): 403-414. For a sampling of further quotes see Paul I. Hershon, *The Pentateuch According to the Talmud. Genesis: with a Talmudical Commentary* (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1883), on Gen. 1:5. Morris quotes an exception to this pattern from Rabbi Judah, who says in *Sanh.* 5:3, "since at the fifth hour the sun is in the east and at the seventh it is in the west." *John*, 158. The hours in this text are being reckoned from the morning at 6 A.M. Heawood gives another qualification: "In the Mishna we again find the order, morning-afternoon-evening, of the times of Prayer (Ber. 4.1)." 394.

<sup>99</sup> Plaut, 920: "At what point did the civil day begin? There is some evidence that at one time the day was reckoned from sunrise to sunrise. But before the close of the biblical period, it had become standard to reckon the day from sunset to sunset, and this has been Jewish practice ever since..." Vaux, 181-182: "In Israel, the day was for a long time reckoned from morning to morning... The change of reckoning must therefore have taken place between the end of the monarchy and the age of Nehemias... this would bring us to the beginning of the exile..." *Encyclopaedia Biblica: a Critical Dictionary of the Literary, Political and Religious History, the Archaeology, Geography and Natural History of the Bible*, vol. 1, ed. T.K. Cheyne & J. Sutherland Black (New York: MacMillan, 1899), "Day," 1,036: "The Israelites regarded the morning as the beginning of the day; in the evening the day 'declined' or 'went down,' ... not till post-exilic times do we find traces of a new mode of reckoning which makes day begin at sunset and continue till the sunset following." Also *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: an Illustrated Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, ed. George Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), "Day," 783.

*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*: "...the custom of reckoning the day as beginning in the evening and lasting until the following evening was probably of late origin..."<sup>100</sup>

*Oxford Companion to the Bible*: "In earlier traditions a day apparently began at sunrise (e.g., Lev. 7:15-17; Judg. 19:4-19)... later its beginning was at sunset and its end at the following sunset... this system became normative... and is still observed in Jewish tradition..."<sup>101</sup>

More specifically, a number of works conjecture that the rabbinic Jews began their evening-to-evening reckoning of the Sabbath after the Babylonian exile, perhaps due to the influence of a certain evening-to-evening reckoning in Babylonian society.<sup>102</sup>

Speaking of a change from a solar to a lunar calendar, Morgenstern writes:

This second calendar was obviously based upon Babylonian models and was adopted under direct Babylonian influence at about 600 B.C., when Babylonian religion and general culture began to affect with steadily increasing force the Jewish exiles in Babylonia and, through those of them who return from exile, the Jews who had remained in Palestine.<sup>103</sup>

A thorough change in the observance of a new calendar may take a significant amount of time to occur, and although a lunar calendar does not necessarily entail reckoning days from the evening, such a change eventually took place. Lauterbach estimates that (448):

"In post-exilic times, however, probably not later than the beginning of the Greek period [late-300's to 200's B.C.],<sup>104</sup> a change in the system of reckoning the day was made, and the day was reckoned as extending from the preceding to the following evening.

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<sup>100</sup> "Day and Night" <http://www.internationalstandardbible.com/D/day-and-night.html>

<sup>101</sup> ed. Bruce Metzger & Michael Coogan (Oxford Univ. Press, 1993), 744.

<sup>102</sup> See also 'Origin of the Sabbath' in "Sabbath" in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (1917)

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13287b.htm> and "Calendar" in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*: "Later Jewish calendar: Following the reign of King Josia (c. 640-609), and especially after the Babylonian exile a number of significant and enduring changes occurred in the Israelite calendar showing that the Jews gradually adopted the Babylonian calendar of the time... The seven day week persisted despite its failure to divide evenly either the month or the year. The Day however, was counted from Evening to Evening, after the Babylonian fashion..." (vol. 11, p. 1068) O. Neugebauer, *The Exact Sciences in Antiquity* (Dover Publications, 1969) and Chaim Raphael, *Festival Days: A History of Jewish Celebrations* (Grove Press) are quoted to the same effect at <http://barnabasnagy.com/blog/evening-to-evening-pagan-babylonian-pharisaical-day-reckoning> *The Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, *The Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1963) and *The Lion Encyclopedia of the Bible* (The Reader's Digest Association & Lion Publishing Corp., 1986), "Home and Family Life," 163 are quoted on this point at <http://barnabasnagy.com/blog/the-jewish-pharisee-lunar-calendar-is-babylonian-and-pagan>

<sup>103</sup> "Supplementary Studies" as quoted at <https://lord-iesu.org/Sabbath/id2.html> The full article can be accessed at JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23505277>

<sup>104</sup> "...it was common in Greece to reckon it [days] officially, for calendar purposes, from sunset to sunset..." *Oxford Classic Dictionary*, 909. For possible evidence that the Jews conformed to the Grecian

Morgenstern gives more detail (“Sources of the Creation Story,” 179):

It was probably coincident with the revision of the festival calendar, which took place in the period after the time of Ezra, and was, in all probability, the work of the *soferim* (scribes) or of the Great Synod (council) in the fourth century B.C. This may also be inferred from the statement in the Talmud (*Berachoth* 33a) that the men of the Great Synod instituted the ceremonies of *Kiddush* and *Havdalah*, the solemn sanctification of the Shabbat on Friday eve, and its equally solemn ushering out on Saturday eve, in other words, ceremonies specifically marking the beginning and close of the Shabbat as at sunset. These were ceremonies for the Jewish home instead of the Temple. This coupled with the fact that in the second Temple the old system of reckoning the day from dawn to dawn continued to be observed, as we have seen, may perhaps indicate that this entire innovation was the work of an anti-priestly group or party in the Great Synod...<sup>105</sup>

*The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* describes the decline of the use of a solar calendar during the inter-Testamental period:

In two pseudepigrapha which date probably from Maccabean times, viz. the *Book of Enoch* (*loc. cit.* [74:12-16])<sup>106</sup> and the *Book of Jubilees* (ch. 6[:36-38]),<sup>107</sup> it is assumed that the year consists of 364 days, i.e. 52 complete weeks. In each case the reckoning is by solar years, but it is hardly likely that this method was in general use at that time.<sup>108</sup>

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calendar of Alexander the Great, see the account of the Arabic historian Alberuni (973-1048, *Chronology of Ancient Nations*, trans. Sachau, 32 ff.) as quoted in Steed, 1.

<sup>105</sup> See Lauterbach qualify this slightly in his discussion, 448-9, footnote 56. Morgenstern elsewhere gives a slightly later date to the prevalence of this new practice: “This in turn, together with other important considerations, would point to a time approximately about the beginning or the first half, of the third century B.C. as that of the introduction of the new system of reckoning the day.” “Supplementary Studies.”

<sup>106</sup> “They [the heavenly bodies] bring about all the years punctiliously, so that they forever neither gain upon nor fall behind their fixed positions for a single day, but they convert the year with punctilious justice into three hundred sixty-four days.” *The Ethiopic Apocalypse of Enoch in The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, ed. James Charlesworth (Doubleday: 1983), in location. The author’s concern to guard against calendrical changes is clear from the context.

<sup>107</sup> “And there will be those who will examine the moon diligently because it will corrupt the (appointed) times and it will advance from year to year ten days. Therefore, the years will come to them as they corrupt and make a day of testimony a reproach and a profane day a festival, and they will mix up everything, a holy day (as) profaned and a profane (one) for a holy day, because they will set awry the months and sabbaths and feasts and jubilees. Therefore, I shall command you and I shall bear witness to you so that you may bear witness to them because after you have died your sons will be corrupted so that they will not make a year only three hundred and sixty-four days. And therefore, they will set awry the months and the (appointed) times and the sabbaths and the feasts, and they will eat all of the blood with all flesh.” *Jubilees* in Charlesworth, in location.

<sup>108</sup> vol. 3, ed. James Hastings (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1910), s.v. “Calendar (Jewish)”. The article continues: “It is recorded by David b. Merwan al-Mikmas (or al-Mukammes), a writer of the 9th cent., that the Sadducees [who were related with the Temple rites] observed months of 30 days, i.e. solar months...”

Lauterbach comments, "As might be expected, such a radical innovation was not immediately generally accepted..." (448) Zeitlin gives more detail:

This change of calendar aroused great protest among the Jews. The author of the book of Jubilees [c. 100 B.C. or before] expressed his opposition in very strong words... that those 'who will make observations of the new moon' will go wrong as to the beginnings of the Sabbaths... The author protested that by a change from a solar to a lunar calendar the Sabbath would be disturbed, and the holy part of the Sabbath would be profaned and the profaned part of the day would be made holy.<sup>109</sup>

The Jews welcoming the Sabbath at its weekly inception with special prayers (mentioned above by Morgenstern) is one of their oldest practices. If the reckoning of the Sabbath changed, and if these prayers were going on, one would expect that these prayers, or the meaning of them, changed as well. Lauterbach discusses in three large paragraphs (452, fn. 56) how the meaning of two key phrases in these prayers changed, quoting the Hebrew and providing the evidence from the sources<sup>110</sup> of what meaning they changed from, to the meaning which they changed to.<sup>111</sup>

The oldest part of the Talmud, the backbone of it, is the Mishna. A general characteristic of the rabbis in the Talmud, Morgenstern accurately describes, is that they "refused to admit the legitimacy of any other practice [than their own], or rather, absolutely ignored all divergent practice..." ("Sources of the Creation Story," 178) Yet, nonetheless, the later rabbis commenting on the earlier Mishna sometimes found themselves in the awkward position of having to deal with material handed down to them which they did not understand or was different from their own accepted practices. Lauterbach narrates (447-8, fn. 54):

The Rabbis of the Talmud who nowhere allude to and probably no longer knew of the earlier mode of reckoning the day felt the difficulty in the phrase: 'Ye shall afflict your souls on the ninth day,' [Lev. 23:32, about the Day of Atonement] and when commenting on it they say: 'But are we to fast on the ninth day?' (Yoma 81b, R.H. 9a,b). A very sound objection indeed. For if the day had in Bible times been reckoned from evening to evening, as it was in talmudic times, then the phrase: 'In the ninth day of the month at evening' contains a contradiction in terms, for the evening is already part of the tenth day. Besides the special injunction 'from even unto even shall ye keep your Sabbath' [Lev. 23:32] would be entirely superfluous, for any other day also extends from

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<sup>109</sup> "The Second Day of the Holidays in the Diaspora" *Jewish Quarterly Review* XLIV (1953-1954), 183-193. Zeitlin further defends the morning-to-morning reckoning of the Book of Jubilees in "The Beginning of the Day in the Calendar of Jubilees" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 78, 2 (Jun., 1959): 153-156.

<sup>110</sup> Citing one of the most ancient Jewish texts, *Seder Olam Rabbah* (dated to the first few centuries after Christ) and b. 'Ar. 11b, as well as the Jewish scholar, Bornstein. Lauterbach cites other traces of the older reckoning in the Talmud in the pages before and after this.

<sup>111</sup> See Heawood demonstrate other apparent changes of the early meaning of words by the rabbis in the Talmud in order to suit their later practices (399-400).

evening to evening. The talmudic explanation... is, of course, a homiletical subterfuge... the Rabbis of the Talmud no longer knew or would not acknowledge that in ancient times there was another mode of reckoning the day...

Heawood brings the Talmudic evidence into further focus on another Scripture passage ("Beginning of the Jewish Day," 394):

...and in Ber. 1.1, the only place in the Mishna where the question is definitely raised as to what constitutes a complete day, it is laid down that for all offerings that must be consumed the same day, the duty of consuming them lasts until the rise of dawn [Lev. 7:15-16]... and that the Sages said 'until Midnight' only to keep a man away from transgression. And what is more remarkable is that the same rule is made to apply to something so individual and personal as the duty of reciting [in prayer, at the starting of the day] the Shema [Dt. 6:4].<sup>112</sup>

Or, to put it more clearly, the rabbis "none the less had to admit the validity of the interpretation of Lev. 7:15... the day was at one time reckoned from sunrise to sunrise." (Morgenstern, "Sources of the Creation Story, 178).

Despite the large shift in practice towards an evening-to-evening observance amongst the rabbis, yet (Lauterbach, 448):

In certain spheres of the population the older system continued to be in use, either exclusively, or side by side with the newer system. Thus in the Temple service the older system continued all through the time of the existence of the Second Temple [through Jesus' time] and there the day was reckoned from morning to morning, or as the Talmud (*Hul.* 83a) puts it 'In sacrificial matters the night follows rather than precedes the day.'<sup>113</sup>

Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, in his standard, modern edition of the *Talmud*, confirms that the Temple reckoned according to natural days (281):

An exception occurs [to the general evening-reckoning of the rabbis], however, with regard to the laws of the Temple service. In this case the day is considered to begin in the morning (at dawn or at sunrise), and hence as far as these laws are concerned the night follows the day.

When the major-share of the transition took place between the older Jewish practice and the newer evening-to-evening practice, is difficult to determine, especially as it likely

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<sup>112</sup> The meaning of the part about keeping away from transgression is that the rabbis put an extra-strict hedge before the Biblical limit in order to prevent the transgression of that limit (compare Gen. 3:3 and Col. 2:21-23).

<sup>113</sup> See the Talmudic quote in context on p. 276 of the section 'Chullin' at Halakhah.com: <https://www.halakhah.com/pdf/kodoshim/Chullin.pdf> Simeon ben Zoma, the author of the saying, was a renowned pupil of the rabbis who lived in the first third of the second century A.D. See 'Ben Zoma' in ed. Jacob Neusner, *Dictionary of Ancient Rabbis: Selections from the Jewish Encyclopedia* (Hendrickson, 2003) 95-97.



was not uniform, but varied greatly, depending on many geographical, local, cultural and temporal factors.<sup>114</sup> Lauterbach says, “According to the Talmud (p. Ned. 8.1 [40d]) even among the common people the older system continued and in the popular language [of the people]... the day included the following and not the preceding night.”<sup>115</sup>

Heawood believed that the change took place around 50 A.D.<sup>116</sup> (after Christianity had arisen and a good portion of the New Testament was written). The evidence which Lauterbach provided regarding the change of the meaning of prayers at the inception of the Sabbath involved the older language being used with regard to the destruction of the Temple, which occurred in 70 A.D. (the newer observance and language in prayer of welcoming the Sabbath in the evening not having taken hold of the people yet).

After the Temple was destroyed, the renowned Jewish governing council, the Sanhedrin, moved to the town of Jamnia in Israel, which became a center of Pharisaic, rabbinic literary activity.<sup>117</sup> “In Jamnia it was the duty of the *Nassi* [leaders] to preach on every Sabbath...” If the Sabbath was being kept on Friday evening in Jamnia at this time, yet it would appear that it was not until later that a full-blown observance of the Sabbath was kept on Friday evening, for it was not until “the beginning of the second century [that] we hear of sermons delivered [in Jamnia] also on Friday night...”<sup>118</sup> If this was the case in a main center of Israel, the full-blown observance of the Sabbath from Friday evening would have likely taken longer to diffuse throughout the rest of Israel.

## The Septuagint

The Septuagint is the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. The oldest and most fundamental part of it, the first five books of Moses, came about, according to the traditionary account in the Letter of Aristeas, from a request of

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<sup>114</sup> *The Book of Judith* 8.6 (second or first century B.C.) is capable of multiple interpretations: “And she fasted all the days of her widowhood, save the eves of the Sabbaths, and the Sabbaths, and the eves of the new moons, and the new moons, and the feasts and joyful days of the house of Israel.” *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, vol. 1, ed. R.H. Charles (Oxford, 1913), in location. Goodspeed translates “eves of” as “day before”. *The Apocrypha, an American Translation*, tr. Edgar Goodspeed (Vintage Books, 1959). That Goodspeed’s translation is possible and probable, see Zeitlin, “Beginning of the Day in the Calendar of Jubilees,” 155.

<sup>115</sup> “When Does the Sabbath Begin?” 450, citing further the Talmud and Bornstein.

<sup>116</sup> Stroes, “Does the Day Begin” 461.

<sup>117</sup> See “Jabneh, or Jamnia” in *Jewish Encyclopedia* (1907) and Emil Schurer, *History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, First Division, vol. 2 (1890; Hendrickson, 2010) 273-6.

<sup>118</sup> Jacob Mann, “The Observance of the Sabbath and the Festivals in the First Two Centuries of the Current Era according to Philo, Josephus, the New Testament, and the Rabbinic Sources” in *The Collected Articles of Jacob Mann*, vol. 1 (Gedera, M. Shalom, 1971), 26-27.

Ptolemy II to have seventy two elders of Israel translate the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek. This is said to have happened during the rule of Philadelphus (285-247 B.C.). The Septuagint subsequently had great influence upon the Hellenistic, Jewish world (especially in the Diaspora outside of the land of Israel), much of which was losing its knowledge of Hebrew and becoming dependent upon the Greek language.

The Greek word used to translate the Hebrew word *boquer* in Genesis ch. 1 (as well as in most of its other instances throughout the Old Testament)<sup>119</sup> is *proi* (πρωι). *Proi* is an adverb of time meaning 'early'.<sup>120</sup> As the word often stands by itself, a predominant meaning of *proi*, according to two standard Septuagint lexicons,<sup>121</sup> is 'early in the morning'. Sometimes the word is translated as 'it dawned' and 'the morning dawned'. While *proi* may mean 'morning' more generally, yet lexicons do not list 'the whole daytime' as one of its meanings.

So what does *proi* mean in the Septuagint's context in Gen. 1:5? The literal translation of the key phrase (και εγενετο πρωι) is, 'and it became morning'. (Muraoka, 604) The language lends itself to pointing to the specific time at which it became morning, that is, at dawn.

The significance of the Septuagint's translational word-choice is that (1) it exemplifies how the ancient Jewish Septuagint translators understood what the Hebrew meant, and (2) it must have had great influence on how the subsequent Hellenistic Jewish world understood the theology of the Sabbath and its practice, especially as readers could hardly have missed the heavy connotation of *proi* signifying 'early morning' throughout the rest of the Old Testament Septuagint. The Septuagint's translational choices, while no doubt being able to be disputed later by those who would stringently adhere to the authority of Pharisaic, rabbinic traditionalism and lore, yet laid a strong textual foundation for the likely practice of a dawn-to-dawn Sabbath during that era.

## Philo

Philo (c. 20 B.C.-c. A.D. 50) was a contemporary of Jesus and Paul and the main literary representative (from what survives) of Hellenistic Judaism during the Second

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<sup>119</sup> See Edwin Hatch & Henry Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint and the Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament...* vol. 2 (Oxford, 1897) 1,234.

<sup>120</sup> William Arndt, F. Gingrich, F. Danker, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed. (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1979) 724.

<sup>121</sup> Johan Lust, Erik Eynikel, Katrin Hauspie, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, rev. ed. (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003); Takamitsu Muraoka, *A Greek English Lexicon Of The Septuagint* (Peters, 2009) 604.

Temple era.<sup>122</sup> Philo, a Levite, lived in Alexandria, Egypt his whole life, which was the home of perhaps one million Jews, the largest Jewish population outside of Israel. When, in A.D. 38, a massacre of the Jews was initiated in his homeland, Philo was selected to head up the Jewish delegation that went to Rome to seek relief from the Roman Emperor Gaius Caligula.

In his treatise, *On the Creation*, at the end of his discussion of the activity on Day One, Philo wrote (IX; 34-35, emphasis added):

“When light had come into being, and darkness had moved out of its way and retired, and *evening and dawn* had been fixed as barriers in the intervals between them, as a necessary consequence a measure of time was forthwith brought about, which its Maker called Day, and not ‘first’ day but [day] ‘one’ ...”<sup>123</sup>

Philo here describes the succession of events on this first day from the onset of light (Gen. 1:3), through the daytime and following evening (Gen. 1:4-5a), to the coming dawn of light (Gen. 1:5b), which makes up Day One. That the word ‘dawn’ in this passage ought to be translated as dawn, and not more broadly as ‘morning’,<sup>124</sup> is clear from a preceding sentence earlier in the paragraph which limits the word ‘dawn’ to the beginning of morning:

“These barriers [between darkness and light] are evening and dawn. The latter, gently restraining the darkness, anticipates the sunrise with the glad tidings of its approach...”<sup>125</sup>

The Greek word Philo uses for ‘dawn’ is *proia* (πρωια).<sup>126</sup> A standard Greek Lexicon defines this word as ‘early morning’. (Arndt, Gingrich, Danker, 724-5)<sup>127</sup> As the rest of Philo’s account of the days of Creation does not provide further explicit details about the beginning and ending of the days, it ought to be inferred that the rest of the days of Creation were counted by Philo as the first one: ending with dawn.

It is true that Philo’s account and exegesis of the days of Creation was highly allegorical and philosophical, and that he says that he did not believe that Creation took

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<sup>122</sup> See David Scholer, ‘Foreward’ in *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*, tr. C.D. Yonge (Hendrickson, 1993) xi-xiii for background information on Philo.

<sup>123</sup> *Philo in Ten Volumes (and Two Supplementary Volumes)*, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 1, tr. F.H. Colson & G.H. Whitaker (Harvard Univ. Press, 1981), 27. This is the most scholarly version of Philo’s *Works* to date. This translation is used in the rest of the Philo citations.

<sup>124</sup> As in C.D. Yonge’s older translation.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *Proia* is a distinct word (being a noun) from the Septuagint’s use of *proi* (an adverb) in the Creation account; however it appears Philo may have understood *proia* to be interchangeable with *proi* in this context, the meaning of the one word therefore shedding light on the meaning of the other.

<sup>127</sup> Citing Philo, Josephus, the Septuagint, the New Testament, etc.

place over six literal days,<sup>128</sup> yet there is still reason to believe that Philo's morning-to-morning interpretation of Gen. 1 carried over into his greater historical outlook, and even possibly his observance of the Sabbath.

Philo gives as a main reason for not holding to a literal, six-day Creation that the first three days occurred before the sun and moon were created.<sup>129</sup> Philo thus determines that 'dawn and evening' on these days must have been 'incorporeal and intelligible', there being 'nothing whatever patent to the senses' in them. However, so far from this making Philo's description of Day One ending with the dawn irrelevant, Philo states that the characteristics of the cycle on Day 1 of Creation 'in the Divine Reason' (X; 36) were 'models and measuring-rules and patterns and seals... serving for the creation of other bodies.' (IX; 34-35) 'The world patent to sense', in fact, made on Day Two and following (X; 36-37), was, according to Philo, made 'after the pattern of the incorporeal' on Day 1. As Philo held the symbolic and incorporeal to be more real than the corporeal, there is good reason to believe that Philo's interpretation of Day One as ending at dawn was indicative of how he understood the other days of Creation, and hence the keeping the 7<sup>th</sup> Day Sabbath.

The allegorical and symbolic in Philo did not overturn, for him, the actual practical keeping of God's commandments in the physical world. While Philo argued that Sabbath observance has a clear symbolic meaning, yet Philo also said that "it does not follow that on that account we may abrogate the laws which are established respecting it".<sup>130</sup> Philo says the same with reference to circumcision and the Jewish festivals. While the symbolic is important for Philo, yet "also must we take care of the laws that are enacted in plain terms: for while they are regarded, those other things also will be more clearly understood, of which these laws are the symbols..." (*Migration of Abraham*, 93)

When did Philo understand regular days and the Sabbath as beginning? In his treatise, *Flaccus* (85), writing about the Jewish persecutions in A.D. 38, Philo counts the hours of the day from dawn: "The first spectacle [of crucifixions] lasting from dawn till the third or fourth hour..." As there appears not to be any evidence contrary to this reckoning in the works of Philo,<sup>131</sup> this is strong support that Alexandrian Judaism (and

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<sup>128</sup> See especially *Allegorical Interpretation of Genesis 2 & 3*, Book 1, section II.

<sup>129</sup> This is not a necessary inference, as the terms, details, sequence and chronology for Days 4-6 when the sun and planets were present are the exact same as on Days 1-3 when there was no sun or planets. As the length of time for the later days of Creation is naturally understood as natural days (confirmed by the later writings of the Hebrew Old Testament where those linguistic features are in place), so the early days of Creation, with the same linguistic features, ought to be so understood. See the detailed discussions of the works previously cited for understanding the Creation account in a historical, literal and straight-forward manner.

<sup>130</sup> *On the Migration of Abraham*, 91.

<sup>131</sup> As confirmed through computer searches through Loeb's twelve volumes of Philo's *Works*.

possibly Hellenistic Judaism generally) reckoned the hours of the day to have started with dawn. This shows that the dawn-reckoning was not unique to the context of the Temple or the land of Israel.

Likewise, in two places<sup>132</sup> Philo wrote of 'the next day at dawn'. All other instances in Philo's works speaking of the 'next day' and of the 'morrow' are consistent with the next day beginning not with that evening, but with the following natural day. While Philo speaks of the dark hours (or 'the deep') of 'the dawn' in *Flaccus* (167), yet the very strong qualifying adjective in this phrase makes the extraordinary use of 'dawn' in this context apparent.

When Philo defines the span of a day in *Questions and Answers on Genesis* (152), he reckons it in two halves: the first progressing from the morning to evening; the second from evening to morning. The passage says:

"...when the law of nature testifies against them [transgressors] concerning what each of them has said or done day by day from morning to evening and from evening to morning."

More specifically about the Sabbath, Philo says in *On the Life of Moses*, Book 2 (268-9) that Moses, regarding the daily provision of manna to the Israelites (Ex. 16) in the wilderness (emphasis added):

"declared that on the Sabbath the air would not yield the accustomed food... And this proved true in the result, for it was *on the day before the Sabbath* that he prophesied this, but *on the morrow* some of the weaker-minded set out to gather the food but were disappointed..."

Philo's chronological details follow the morning-to-morning pattern of the Sabbath laid out in Ex. 16 itself. However Philo was not simply imitating the language of Scripture when earlier in the paragraph he said, significantly, that the 'sixth day was to be followed by the dawning [ἀνατέλλειν] of the seventh...' The root Greek word means 'cause to spring up or rise' and often refers to, in Philo, the Septuagint and the New Testament, the dawn or sun arising (Gen. 32:31; Ex. 22:3; Isa. 58:10; Mt. 4:16; 5:45; 13:6; Mk. 4:6; 16:2; Js. 1:11; 2 Pt. 1:19; etc.). (Arndt, Gingrich, Danker, 62)

A very revealing text is Philo's *Questions and Answers on Exodus* (11). Philo poses a question and answers it: "(Ex. 12:6c) Why is the Passover sacrificed at evening? Perhaps because... it was not (proper) to prepare it before the ninth hour." The ninth hour, or three in the afternoon, was a traditional time to kill the Passover sacrifice. While Philo says that the sacrifice of the Passover was to be sacrificed at evening, yet, in reckoning it the ninth hour, Philo counts the day of the Passover to have started

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<sup>132</sup> *On Joseph* (XXXV; 207) and in *Moses* (I; 276).

according to the natural day at dawn. This is consistent with Matthew, Mark and Luke in the same era reckoning Passover Day (or the first day of Unleavened Bread) according to its natural day in Mt. 26:17,20; Mk. 14:12,17; Lk. 22:1,7,14 and not from the evening.

In searching Philo's works, we have not found contrary evidence to the above principles. As Philo was a major representative of first century, Hellenistic Judaism, as he interpreted the First Day of Creation as ending at dawn, as he reckons regular days and the Sabbath according to natural days from dawn and as he was a firm supporter of keeping the Sabbath (*On the Migration of Abraham*, 89-94), it is likely that there was a significant contingent of Judaism keeping the Sabbath from dawn to dawn in the days of Jesus and the apostles.

### Josephus

Most information gleaned from early Jewish literature is not easy to date, if it is at all possible. Data from the detailed histories of Josephus,<sup>133</sup> the first century Jewish Pharisee<sup>134</sup> and historian, however, is much more easily contextualized.<sup>135</sup> As we might expect from the material above, Josephus presents a mixed picture during his time of the Sabbath being reckoned in society from possibly both morning and evening, this not necessarily conflicting in his own mind.<sup>136</sup>

Josephus' account of the First Day of Creation,<sup>137</sup> which has the most specificity for time references for all the days of Creation Week, is not explicitly clear and can be variously interpreted. On the other hand, all of the references to 'hours' of the day in Josephus' works (including those covering the Old Testament history along with post-Biblical history) reckon the hours from sunrise (6 A.M.).<sup>138</sup> When Josephus reckons hours after the twelfth hour (6 P.M.),<sup>139</sup> he does not reckon them as the first hours of the

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<sup>133</sup> Josephus (37-c. 100) was born in Jerusalem and appointed the head military commander over Galilee during the First Roman-Jewish War. Later he wrote important, detailed, histories of the Jews.

<sup>134</sup> For a rather full analysis of Josephus as a Pharisee, see Steve Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees* (Brill, 2001).

<sup>135</sup> Data from Josephus is too infrequently brought into the discussion and has often not been sufficiently evaluated or investigated. We have not found any secondary source taking into account the information that can be gleaned from Philo, as we have done.

<sup>136</sup> If both observances were happening in Israel, this would help explain the lack of conflict in Josephus' narration and language about it, though other explanations are possible.

<sup>137</sup> *Antiquities*, Book 1, Chapter 1 in *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, tr. William Whiston, commentary by Paul Maier (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999). All the following quotes from Josephus are from this edition of the Whiston translation.

<sup>138</sup> This was determined from a computer search for 'hour' in multiple editions of the William Whiston translation of Josephus's *Works*. It has also been in part confirmed by other secondary literature.

<sup>139</sup> e.g. *War* 6.1.7.

day, but as the first hours of the 'night'. In *Antiquities* 4.8.13, Josephus implicitly reckons a day from morning to evening: "...twice every day, both when the day begins and when the hour of sleep comes on." (also *Ant.* 3.10.1 & 3.10.5) Whenever Josephus speaks of the Sabbath as 'the next day', or of 'the day following' the Sabbath, the events thereon never occur that evening, but always on the next natural day.<sup>140</sup>

A detailed passage on the Sabbath occurs in Josephus' autobiographical *Life* (53-54). During the First Roman-Jewish War, in approximately 66-67 A.D., Josephus gives his first-hand account of travelling to the city of Tiberias (on the western shore of the lake of Galilee, a region of much of Jesus's activity only 35 years earlier) in order to meet with civil leaders regarding military leadership (emphasis added):

However, they desired me *to lodge* somewhere else, because *the next day was the Sabbath*; and that it was not fit the city of Tiberias should be disturbed [on that day]. So I suspected nothing and went away to Taricheae... *On the next day*, therefore, they all came into the Proseucha [place of prayer]... But the multitude were not pleased with what was said and would certainly have gone into a disturbance, except that *the sixth hour*, which was now come, dissolved the assembly, at which hour our laws require us to go to dinner *on Sabbath days*; so Jonathan and his colleagues put off their council until *the next day*... When I was informed of these affairs, I determined to go to the city of Tiberias *in the morning*. Accordingly, *on the next day*, about *the first hour of the day*, I came from Taricheae and found the multitude already assembled in the Proseucha...

Note that Josephus in this passage reckons the Sabbath, or 'the next day', not as beginning with the night that he lodged elsewhere, but with the following morning. The 'sixth hour' must refer to noon (being counted from sunrise) as later in the passage the 'first hour', when the civil leaders met early the following day in the morning, cannot refer to 7 P.M. or 1 A.M., but must refer to 7 A.M.<sup>141</sup> 'The next day' after the Sabbath did not then begin Saturday evening, but rather, naturally, it began 'in the morning'. This passage uses language in accordance with natural days to speak of the Sabbath and the time around it.

An ambiguous passage, which is not clear either way, is found in *Ant.* 16.6.2, "...that they be not obliged to go before any judge on the Sabbath day, nor on the day of the preparation to it, after the ninth hour."

There appears to be only one passage in the works of Josephus that is clear for an evening-to-evening Sabbath (and that in a different location in Israel). Speaking of the Jewish, zealots' defense of the temple area in Jerusalem against the invading Romans in A.D. 70 (*War* 4.9.12):

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<sup>140</sup> e.g. *Ant.* 18.9.6; *War* 2.21.8; 2.14.5; *Life* 32.

<sup>141</sup> Whiston confirms this in a footnote, as well as Mason, *Life of Josephus*, in location.

...the zealots threw their darts [down upon the enemy] easily from a superior place... having withal erected four very large towers aforehand, that their darts might come from higher places... the last [such tower, of four] was erected above the top of the pastophoria,<sup>142</sup> 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, as giving notice to the people when they were to leave off work, and when they were to go to work again.

While this passage seems to clearly describe an ongoing practice in Jerusalem of publicly signaling by the blast of a trumpet the Sabbath to begin and end Friday evening and Saturday evening by the time of the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, it is not clear when this practice began,<sup>143</sup> how or why it began,<sup>144</sup> or how it coexisted with the Temple rituals which clearly reckoned days from the morning, per the vast majority of evidence presented above and below.

Heawood gives a necessary, general precaution to be heeded for historical research while intimating how the timing of the observance of the Sabbath may have developed after the Temple was destroyed, especially as rabbinic pharisaism, and their evening-to-evening Sabbath keeping, took over Judaism (399):<sup>145</sup>

The destruction of the Temple must have made great changes in many spheres of Jewish thought and practice, and in none more than in the ritual of the home and particularly the synagogue, which must have taken a different complexion when deprived of the background of the Temple services. It is rather hazardous to attribute to the period before that date later phases of Jewish thought and practice...

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<sup>142</sup> A side-room of a temple. Compare "Pastophoria" in *Cyclopedia* and "Architectural Elements in Churches, Pastophorium" in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, vol 1, edited by Aziz Suryal Atiya <http://ccdlib.libraries.claremont.edu/cdm/ref/collection/cce/id/219> 2 Kings 16:18 is an interesting parallel, but it is by no means clear that 'the covert for the sabbath that they had built' in the Temple complex in this Bible verse connotes the same physical structure, the same purpose for such a structure or that they reckoned the Sabbath day this way in 2 Kings. For possible archeological evidence of the structure Josephus speaks of, see ed. H. S., *Biblical Archeological Society* 06:04 (July/Aug 1980). The relevant quote is given here: <https://yrm.org/heard-teach-scriptural-day-begins-sunrise-rather-jewish-sunset-true/>

<sup>143</sup> Without further evidence, a recent origin of it cannot be ruled out.

<sup>144</sup> It is possible that the Temple made accommodation for the evening-to-evening viewpoint from the pressure of parties in Israel by initiating this practice to appease such groups in the populace while at the same time maintaining its own reckoning of rituals.

<sup>145</sup> The fullest and most detailed treatment we have met with of the calendrical changes by the Jews after the Biblical era is in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, "Calendar (Jewish)".



## Conclusion on Calendar Issues and the Later Jewish Practice

To summarize our findings: We find it likely that Israel kept a calendar with both solar and lunar elements in it during the Biblical era. What observances they had of the monthly new moon were consistent with reckoning days from the morning. While some secondary sources posit multiple calendars being used in Israel, reckoning civil days from the morning and ecclesiastical days from the evening, yet this is contrary to the Biblical, ecclesiastical calendar which reckoned days from the morning, and there is no clear evidence of an evening reckoning of days in the Old Testament at all.

The Septuagint, the highly influential, ancient, Greek translation of the Old Testament (3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.), in its word choices in Genesis 1, lays a strong foundation for the possibility of a widespread dawn-to-dawn keeping of the Sabbath amongst Hellenistic Judaism. Philo, one of the most prominent and prolific Hellenistic Jews and a contemporary of Jesus and Paul, interprets the First Day of Creation, a pattern for the rest of the days of Creation, as ending with dawn. The rest of Philo's works reckon the days of the week and the Sabbath as beginning at dawn. We have not found any evidence in Philo contrary to this pattern.

The evening-to-evening keeping of the Sabbath was probably of a late origin, there being primary source evidence during the inter-testamental era of calendrical change affecting the reckoning of the weekly Sabbath. The Talmud (compiled during the 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.) generally reckons days and the Sabbath from evening-to-evening, yet there is evidence in its oldest parts that days at one time were reckoned from the morning, the rabbis being unable to satisfactorily explain key verses such as Lev. 7:15-16 and Lev. 23:32. While the rabbis in the Talmud considered the Jewish rituals in the home consecrating the beginning and ending of the weekly Sabbath to have started with the Great Synod after the Babylonian exile,<sup>146</sup> yet there is evidence in the Talmud that the meaning of key time-references in these prayers were changed in conformity to the new evening-to-evening observance, possibly as late as after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

As such calendrical development would not likely have spread evenly and comprehensively through society (it possibly not even being complete by the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.), especially as the official Temple reckoning was according to the morning, it may be the case that both a morning and an evening observance were occurring in the

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<sup>146</sup> This is likely a claim of exaggerated antiquity, as they made the same claim for many more things which they had not the ability to know the origins of, taking pride in such things coming from the persons they claimed to be the founders of their traditional practice.

time of Christ.<sup>147</sup> Josephus gives clear evidence that there was an evening-to-evening observance of the Sabbath through the trumpet-signal of a priest in the Temple by its destruction in 70 A.D., though it is not known when, why or how that practice originated, or how it coexisted with the Temple reckoning its calendar and sacrificial system according to days beginning in the morning. All other language and evidence in Josephus' works (covering the Biblical period and after) appears to be consistent with reckoning days and the Sabbath from the morning.

With the destruction of the Temple came the domination of Judaism by rabbinic pharisaism, their keeping of the Sabbath from the evening and the collecting and editing of the Talmuds. Significantly, the numerous calendrical changes being instituted by the Jewish officials during this time in the first several centuries after the Messiah had come (departing from the previous practice during the early first century, more into conformity to what Judaism holds to today), were being driven by Babylonian, Jewish sources.<sup>148</sup>

It ought to be kept firmly in mind that if, in the future, significant and indisputable evidence arises that certain persons or groups in Israel in the Biblical era practiced an evening-to-evening Sabbath (which might be the case, erroneous practices existing in every age), this in no way shakes the teaching of God's Word (which alone is normative) of a morning-to-morning Sabbath (Gen. 1-2:4 with Ex. 20:8,11).

If numerous Jews, both ancient and modern, recognized that Scripture taught a morning-to-morning Sabbath, while later, rabbinic, Judaism changed this, why is it that many of these same people yet continued to observe the Sabbath evening-to-evening? Rabbi Ismar Schorsch clearly affirms modern Judaism's change from Scripture and yet he entitled his article, "The Day Begins with Night".<sup>149</sup> By keeping the Sabbath evening-to-evening, later Jewish traditionalism has self-consciously preferred the authority and tradition of men before the commandment of God. Jesus aptly and strikingly said, "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition... in

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<sup>147</sup> Talmon speaks of "the fierce solar versus lunar calendar controversy, which factionalized Judaism in the latter half of the Second Temple period," citing references. The evidence from the Qumran community current to that era has been variously interpreted, though, according to Talmon, they "abided by a solar calendar of 364 days per annum, previously known from the books of Jubilees and Enoch." "Reckoning the Sabbath," 11-12.

<sup>148</sup> See *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, "Calendar (Jewish)" for a very full account of the details.

<sup>149</sup> Schorsch gives part of his reasons as: "...the talmudic innovation of reckoning a day from the eve before suggests a larger view of life. While we may never know what prompted the Rabbis to reconfigure the day, the existential benefit is indisputable. By inaugurating the celebration of Shabbat or a festival at sunset, they have framed a stretch of time that can be ritually filled to heighten the religious experience."

vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” (Mt. 15:6,9)

### III. The New Testament

#### 1. A Survey of the New Testament

The Old Testament's full and clear teaching throughout its pages of a morning-to-morning Sabbath lays a large and solid foundation for understanding how days and the Sabbath continued to be reckoned into the New Testament.<sup>150</sup> The New Testament data is very similar to that of the Old Testament. Some of the more important verses follow. Note that all of them are reckoning the beginning of the day, not from the evening, but from the morning.

Before the Resurrection:

Mk. 4:35 "And *the same day, when the even was come*, He saith unto them, 'Let us pass over unto the other side.'"

Mk. 11:11-12 "And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now *the eventide was come*, He went out unto Bethany with the twelve. And *on the morrow*, when they were come from Bethany..."

Lk. 4:40-42 "Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto Him... And when it was day [γενομένης δε ημερας], He departed... and the people sought Him, and came unto Him..."

Lk. 6:12-13 "...He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night [ην διανυκτερευων] in prayer to God... And when it was day [και οτε εγενετο ημερα], He called unto Him his disciples..."

Lk. 13:33 (Jesus, figurative) "Nevertheless I must walk *to day*, and *to morrow*, and *the day following*: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem."

Lk. 24:29 "Abide with us: for *it is toward evening, and the day is far spent*..."

Jn. 6:16-22 "And *when even was now come*, his disciples went down unto the sea, and entered into a ship... And *it was now dark*... they see Jesus walking on the sea... *The day following*, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea..."

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<sup>150</sup> The evidence in the New Testament is largely descriptive, which has given many persons some hesitancy in making sure conclusions on the issue when they approach the question from the New Testament first, and/or assume that the Old Testament taught an evening-to-evening Sabbath. Some of the data of the Old Testament, however, is prescriptive (Gen. 1 with Ex. 20:8,11; Ex. 16:23,25-26,28-29; Lev. 23; etc.), which fills in this gap and is the principle upon which continuity from the Old Testament into the New Testament on this topic is grounded.

## After the Resurrection:

Acts 2:1,15 “And when the day of Pentecost [on the first day of the week, the Lord’s Day] was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place... ‘...it is but the third hour of the day [9 A.M.]’”

Acts 4:3,5 “And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold *unto the next day: for it was now eventide...* and it came to pass *on the morrow*, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes...”

Acts 10:23-24 “Then called he them in, *and lodged them. And on the morrow* Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. *And the morrow after* they entered into Caesarea...”

Acts 12:6,18 “And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night [τη νυκτι εκεινη] Peter was sleeping between two soldiers... Now as soon as it was day [γενομενης δε ημερας], there was no small stir among the soldiers what was become of Peter.”

Acts 13:44 “And the *next sabbath day* came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.”<sup>151</sup>

Acts 16:33,35 “And he took them the same hour of the night [εν εκεινη τη ωρα της νυκτος], and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his... And when it was day [ημερας δε γενομενης], the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying...”

Acts 23:11-12 “And the night following the Lord stood by him [Paul]... And when it was day [γενομενης δε ημερας], certain of the Jews banded together...”

Acts 23:23,31-32 “...at the third hour of the night;... Then the soldiers... took Paul, and brought him *by night* to Antipatris. *On the morrow* they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle:”

Acts 27:27,33,39 “But when the fourteenth night was come... about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country... And while the day was coming on [αχρι δε ου εμελλεν ημερα γινεσθαι], Paul besought them all to take

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<sup>151</sup> This is speaking of the Jewish 7<sup>th</sup> Day Sabbath. Note that when nearly the whole city gathered together to hear the Word of God on the Sabbath ‘Day’ (not ‘Sabbath evening’), it was not in the evening, but the daytime. As the morning and evening sacrifices in the Temple in Jerusalem occurred at 9 A.M. and 3 P.M., it would be awfully strange for Jews to begin celebrating the Sabbath in the evening without any official sacrifices to commence the Day for another 15 hours. If it be responded that the morning sacrifice didn’t happen till three hours after dawn, it may be aptly observed that this allowed the Jews in Jerusalem after time to wake up and get ready, to go to the Temple in order to observe the sacrifice (compare Acts 2:1,15), just as Christians often hold their public worship assemblies on the Lord’s Day morning, as reasonably close to when the Sabbath begins as is convenient.

meat... And when it was day [οτε δε ημερα εγενετο], they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore..."

Acts 28:23 "And when they had appointed him [Paul] *a day*, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, *from morning till evening*."

### In the Epistles

Rom. 13:12 "The night is far spent, the day is at hand... [η νυξ προεκομην η δε ημερα ηγγικεν]"

James 4:13 "Go to now, ye that say, 'To day or to morrow [σημερον η αυριον] we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:'"

[‘Day’ is here being distinguished from the ‘morrow’, which uniformly in Scripture begins with the morning.]

Whenever the New Testament speaks of something happening on the ‘morrow’, it is always consistent with that thing happening after the following morning (as opposed it happening that evening): Lk. 10:34-35; Acts 10:9; Acts 20:7,11; 22:30; 23:15,20; 25:17,22-23; 1 Cor. 15:32; James 4:13-14. Likewise the phrases ‘next day’ and ‘day following’ always imply the thing happening the following morning or after: Mt. 27:62 (note that Matthew was Jewish, and writing for Jews); Lk. 9:37; Jn. 1:29,35; 6:22; 12:12 (John was Jewish); Acts 7:26; 14:20; 16:11; 20:15; 21:1,8,18,26; 23:31-32; 25:6; 27:3,18; 28:13.

When the parts of the day are reckoned for the whole day in the New Testament, the day-night sequence occurs more frequently than the night-day sequence: Mt. 4:2; 12:40; Mk. 4:27; Lk. 18:7; 21:37; Jn. 9:4; Acts 9:24; 26:7; Rev. 4:8; 7:15; 12:10; 14:11; 20:10. All of the instances of the night-day sequence in the New Testament are due to contextual factors: Mk. 4:27 (sleeping); 5:5 (about a lunatic in the tombs); Lk. 2:37 (fastings); Acts 20:31 (watching and warning); Rom. 13:12 (eschatological); 2 Cor. 11:25 (overnight in the sea); 1 Thess. 2:9 (labor and travail); 3:10 (praying); 2 Thess. 3:8 (labor and travail); 1 Tim. 5:5 (desolate, prayers); 2 Tim. 1:3 (praying). One possible reason that praying is referred to more often as happening ‘night and day’ is because normally in the day one is with greater focus working, whereas it is in the evening with rest that one usually has more time to put other things away and devote themselves to direct, concentrated prayer.

As has been noted for Hebrew, the phrase 'night and day' is not equivalent in words or meaning to the phrase 'evening and morning'. The same is true in Greek. The only time that 'evening' and 'morning' are conjoined in the Greek New Testament (Acts 28:23), the phrase reads 'morning till evening', and this period of time, in the same verse, is called 'a day'. While the colloquial usage of the culture is not necessarily determinative of how days are officially reckoned in that culture, yet it would be expected that the colloquial usage will most often reflect how days *are* officially reckoned in that society.<sup>152</sup>

When did the Jews officially start their day? The most official, institutional and practically influential reckoning amongst the Jews must naturally have been that of the Temple.<sup>153</sup> The Temple reckoned the day beginning at sunrise (6 A.M.) with the hours of the day being counted therefrom (*Cyclopedia*, "Time"):

The hours of the day... were naturally counted from sunrise (cock-crowing, קריאת הַגִּבּוֹר, was a designation of time observed in the Temple, Mishna, *Tamid*, 1, 2); whence the *third* hour (Mt. 20:3; Acts 2:15) corresponds about to our nine o'clock A.M. (the time when the market-place was full of men, πλήθουσα ἀγορά; see Kype, *Observat.* 1, 101 sq.; also the first hour of prayer, Acts 2:15); the end of the *sixth* hour (Mt. 20:5; Joh. 19:14) to midday; with the eleventh hour (Mt. 20:6; Mr. 15:34) the day inclined to a close and labor ceased (see also Jn. 1:39; 4:52; Acts 3:1; 10:3). There were three daily hours of prayer morning, noon, and night.

## 2. Evening-to-Evening?

When referring to the Sabbath, the New Testament always speaks of the 'Sabbath Day' and never the 'Sabbath evening'. The texts that mention the Sabbath nearly always speak of events during the daytime, and are always consistent with the Sabbath starting

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<sup>152</sup> That the morning/day-evening/night sequence is less dominant in the New Testament (13 instances to 11 of the evening/night-morning/day sequence) than in the Old Testament is probably due to their being less of the historical genre in the New Testament and more special contexts. The New Testament evidence ought not to stand alone, but be seen in light of the foundational character of the Old Testament.

<sup>153</sup> Whatever interpretation and weight is placed on Josephus' evidence (quoted previously) of a certain Temple reckoning of the Sabbath by 70 A.D. from evening-to-evening, note that these trumpet blasts, according to Josephus, occurred weekly, not daily. Hence there is still reason to ask how the Jews officially reckoned the beginning of their *regular days*. Heawood answers this: "As we have seen, the Temple ritual began about cockcrow and was continued with much ceremony until the offering of the morning sacrifice; but it was only when the appointed watcher was able to say 'The whole East is lighted up'... that the great gate of the Temple was unlocked and thrown open with a noise which, it was said, could be heard as far as Jericho; and then and then only could the lamb (or lambs) of the 'Continual Burnt Offering' be slain (*Tam.* 3.7, 8)." 401. This must have been the grand moment, when the Temple was still standing, evident to all within the vicinity of Jerusalem, of the beginning of the day, which would have occurred on Sabbath-morning likewise.

in the morning. The two passages which may seem to read otherwise are Mk. 1:21-32 and Lk. 23:53. In examining Mk. 1:21-32 first,<sup>154</sup> it will be seen that this passage is at best unclear and is not express warrant for the evening-to-evening view.

On the Sabbath day (Mk. 1:21) Jesus casts out a devil from a person in the synagogue in the morning. 'And immediately his fame was spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee' (v. 28). Next, Jesus and some disciples entered into Peter's house and healed Peter's mother-in-law from a fever. Then:

*"at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased and them that were possessed of devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And He healed many that were sick of diverse diseases and cast out many devils..."*

Assuming that the common, Jewish people in rural Galilee practiced a rabbinically strict, evening-to-evening view of the Sabbath (if that even was the practice of the majority of rabbis at that time and location), it is then claimed by some that the common people waited until evening when they would have understood the Sabbath to have ended in order to bring out their sick and afflicted, so as not to impinge upon the Sabbath.

However, the passage reads completely coherently without this assumption: Near the beginning of Christ's public ministry, Christ casts out a demon from a person which causes a popular uproar of excitement. While Christ spent the afternoon at a friend's home, word got around and by evening the whole town is lining up at the door to press Jesus to heal their dear ones.

In addition to this, Jesus later openly taught that it was good and right to heal on the Sabbath (Mt. 12:1-13) and called a Jewish leader that said otherwise a 'hypocrite' (Lk. 13:14-15). In doing so, Jesus appealed to common sense (Lk. 13:15-16). While the adversarial Jewish leaders were 'ashamed' on this occasion, the common people, having a bit more common sense and not caring to be straight-jacketed by the legalistic yoke of the rabbis, 'rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.' (Lk. 13:17) It is not likely that the common people were as strict or as artificially pious as the Pharisees about not lugging<sup>155</sup> their dear ones along to be healed on the Sabbath by the traveling prophet. If the common people routinely disobeyed the direct instruction of Jesus Himself (especially when miracles were involved, Mk. 7:36; Lk. 5:14-15, etc., even on this same occasion, Mk. 1:44-45), who was a 'rabbi' (Jn. 1:38,49; 3:2, 6:25), how much more were they liable to neglect to punctiliously observe the artificial rabbinic regulations which would have prevented them from carrying their loved ones to Jesus

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<sup>154</sup> This latter text will be dealt with in-depth in its own section below.

<sup>155</sup> Such carrying of loved-ones would probably have been seen as a violation of Jer. 17:19-27 by much of rabbinic Judaism (v. 22, "Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the sabbath day...").



to be healed on the Sabbath? The possibility (and probable reality) of the people's neglect of obeying even the righteous teachings of 'the scribes and the pharisees' was great enough that Jesus was careful to exhort 'the multitude' to this (Mt. 23:1-3).

The common people's compliance with rabbinic stipulations has often been overestimated.<sup>156</sup> Josephus records that the association of the Pharisees were only 'above six thousand'. (*Ant.* 17.2.4) Hence, the Pharisees only composed a few percent (if that) of the total Israeli population.<sup>157</sup> While Josephus records that the Pharisees had great influence with the people (*Ant.* 13.10.5; 18.1.3), he also records numerous examples where the multitudes acted immediately, *en masse* and overwhelmingly against the will of the Pharisees (e.g. *Ant.* 17.2.4.). The Gospels record a plethora of times where the will of the people did not lie with the Pharisees (Mt. 9:10-11, 34-35; 12:14-15, 22-24; 21:8-11, 15-16, 45-46; 23:13; Mk. 3:6-7; 12:12-13; Lk. 5:21,26,29-30; 7:29-30; 15:1-2; 18:10-13; 19:37-39; Jn. 7:41-49; etc.).

Much of the preserved literature of Jewish sects (including the Mishna in the Talmud)<sup>158</sup> from around the time of Christ cannot necessarily be regarded as having been reflective of the practice of the Jewish populace at large. The *Damascus Covenant* of

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<sup>156</sup> "In a popular essay published in 1956, Morton Smith argued that the then common notion that Pharisaism was the 'normative' Judaism of the later Second Temple period is a mistake based mainly on claims about the Pharisees made or implied by the Talmud and Josephus. But the Talmud's history is a mixture of folktales and the wishful thinking of rabbis living centuries after the Destruction, and Josephus' claims about Pharisaic popularity are made in a few isolated passages in his later works (the later books of *Antiquities*, and *Life*, published twenty or twenty-five years after the Destruction), are not borne out by his narrative of the history of the Second Temple period, in which the Pharisees scarcely figure, and are best understood as attempts by Josephus to recommend the increasingly influential post-Destruction Pharisees to the Roman government. Smith's argument was later expanded by Jacob Neusner, and... is at present enjoying a modest currency; Smith's larger points about the variety of first-century Judaism and the non-normative character of Pharisaism are widely accepted..." Seth Schwartz, "Reviewed Work: *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees: A Compositional-Critical Study* by Steve Mason," *AJS Review* 19, 1 (1994) 84.

<sup>157</sup> The Roman historian Tacitus estimated the population of Jerusalem in the First Jewish-Roman War (66-73 A.D.) as 600,000, though "recent estimates of the population of Jerusalem suggest something in the neighbourhood of a hundred thousand." J.R.C. Cousland, *The Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew* (Brill: 2002) 60. Josephus records that in his time there were 'two hundred and forty cities and villages in Galilee' (*Life*, 45) and that 'the very least of them contain above fifteen thousand inhabitants' (*War* 3.3.2, which would give a total of 3.6 million persons). While there has been at least one scholar who has defended Josephus' numbers, most modern scholars consider them exaggerated. "While most villages had a population of under four hundred, the fishing towns of Bethsaida, Capernaum, Tarachaea-Magdala, and others, may have had populations of as many as a two or three thousand." Marg Mowczko, "Galilee in the First Century CE" <https://margmowczko.com/galilee-first-century-ce/> Many modern scholars place the estimated total population of Galilee to have been between 200,000 and 700,000 persons. Thus, it is likely that the Pharisees were only a few percent of the Israeli population in the time of Christ.

<sup>158</sup> Representing Jewish rabbinism, which was initially greatly influenced by the Pharisees, and later, after the destruction of the Temple (70 A.D.), dominated by Pharisaic thought and practice.

the Jewish Qumran community, current to that time, ruled, "If [a beast] should fall into a cistern or pit, he shall not lift it out on the Sabbath."<sup>159</sup> The Mishna affirms the same general rule, though one could give the animal in the pit food to keep it alive.<sup>160</sup> Yet, when Jesus teaches that it is right and good to help an animal out of a pit on the Sabbath Day, He assumes as the basis of his argument that all of the common folk in his audience would naturally do this: "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath Day?" (Lk. 14:5; Mt. 12:11) Did any person respond to this rhetorical question in the affirmative? "And they could not answer him again to these things." (Lk. 14:6)

If this be so, then there is no reason to assume in Mk. 1:32-33 that the common people would have hesitated for a moment to bring their loved ones to be healed by Jesus on the Sabbath. Hence, their lining up at Jesus' door at evening ought not to be attributed to the Sabbath ending at evening, but is consistent with that Sabbath continuing through the evening until the following dawn. Nor ought it to be assumed in the Gospels that the common people kept an evening-to-evening Sabbath because some of the rabbis at that time may have.

When was the day reckoned to begin on this occasion? The parallel passage in Luke 4:16-42 is clear that it was in the morning: "Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto Him... and when it was day [γενομένης δε ημερας], He departed and went into a desert place..." (vv. 40,42)

### 3. The Roman Civil Reckoning & the Gospel of John

#### The Roman Civil Reckoning

Different nations and cultures have used various time keeping methods throughout history. The ancient historian Pliny gives an overview:

"The actual period of a day has been differently kept by different people: the Babylonians count the period between two sunrises, the Athenians that between two sunsets... the common people everywhere from dawn to dark, the Roman priests and the authorities who fixed the official day, and also the Egyptians and Hipparchus, the period from midnight to midnight."<sup>161</sup>

While we affirm the usefulness and legitimacy of using various time keeping methods for man's variegated purposes and needs, and the propriety of deferring to a society's

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<sup>159</sup> 11:13-14.

<sup>160</sup> See Anthony Saldarini, "Comparing the Traditions: New Testament and Rabbinic Literature," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 7 (1997): 199, 201-202. The later Talmudic rabbis made further qualifications.

<sup>161</sup> *Natural History*, II, 188; Loeb translation, as quoted in Morris, *John*, 801.

*de facto* system, yet we find that the universal time-keeping method which has most clearly been written into nature by God in Creation (which hence comes out commonly in man's positive methods) to be the most preferable generally, and obligatory for keeping the Lord's Day. That said, it would not be surprising, nor would it overturn our thesis, to find a different civil, time-keeping method found descriptively in Scripture, especially in the multi-cultural context of the Gospels.

How did the Roman culture (which was mixed into Israel in the 1st Century) reckon a day, and do the Gospel-writers use this method of reckoning? It is clear that the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark & Luke) use the Jewish method of numerically reckoning hours from the morning at 6 A.M. (Mt. 20:1-13; 27:45-46; Mk. 15:25,33-34; Lk. 23:44). The book of Acts (most likely written by Luke) likewise uses this method exclusively: Acts 2:15 (third hour); 3:1 (ninth hour); 10:3 (ninth hour); 10:9 (sixth hour); 10:30 (ninth hour); 23:23 (third hour of the night). This is significant. Luke was likely a gentile, the audience he wrote for must have included not only Jews, but the widening gentile, universal, Church<sup>162</sup> and his history is international in scope. As Luke must have expected his readers to understand his reckoning of time without too much trouble, this demonstrates that the morning-to-morning understanding of days (or at least the apt facility to easily understand it) could not have been limited strictly to the Jews or Israel.

John's Gospel presents a less certain picture. There is a question whether John reckons the hours of the day from the morning (according to the Jewish, Temple reckoning) or from a certain Roman reckoning from midnight. The relevant verses are: Jn. 1:39 (tenth hour); 4:6 (sixth hour); 4:52 (seventh hour); 11:9 (twelve hours for daylight); 19:14 (sixth hour). Leon Morris discusses the relevance of a certain midnight-to-midnight reckoning by the Romans to the Gospel of John (158):

But it is not at all clear that this Roman usage is relevant. It is true that the Romans counted from midnight when reckoning the legal day on which leases or contracts were dated (see Dods), but for all other purposes they appear to have reckoned from sunrise. For example they marked noon on their sundials with VI not XII. The *Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* (compiled and edited by Sir P. Harvey, Oxford, 1959), makes it clear that both Greeks and Romans measured from sunrise... Gepp and Haigh's *Latin-English Dictionary* defines *prima hora* [the first hour] as 'daybreak, sunrise' and defines other hours accordingly. It notes no other usage... It is difficult to see why this Evangelist alone should have such an unusual mode of reckoning time as the Roman legal use."

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<sup>162</sup> William Ramsay finds the reckoning of the day in Asia Minor (where Luke was making his travels and where much of the early Church spread) during the first century to have been from sunrise. "The Sixth Hour," *The Expositor*, Fifth Series 3.6 (June 1896): 457-459  
<https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/expositor/series5/03-457.pdf>

B.F. Westcott, in favor of understanding the Roman society and John as reckoning from midnight, cites two literary examples from the Early Church martyrdoms of Polycarp (A.D. 69-155) and Pionius († c. 249-251) which may (or may not) evidence this midnight view. Morris comments (800-1):

It is a slender basis on which to erect a theory which involves John in a method of counting the hours at variance with what is established in every other place... The critical point is the absence of evidence for dividing this 'official day' into hours reckoned from midnight.

### Analysis of the Gospel of John

In Jn. 1:38-39 two disciples follow Jesus, and, upon invitation, "they came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour." Does this reference refer to 10 A.M. or 4 P.M.? If 4 P.M., then verse 39 considers the evening to be a part of 'that day'. Heinrich Meyer comments on this text about the appropriateness of the morning reckoning:

The Romans themselves, moreover, frequently measured the day after the Babylonian computation of the hours, according to the twelve hours from sunrise to sunset; and the tenth hour especially is often named, as in our text, as the hour of return from walking, and mention of it occurs as a late hour in the day, when e.g. the soldiers were allowed to rest (Liv. ix. 37), or when they went to table (Martial, vii. 1), etc.<sup>163</sup>

While most of the relevant verses in John could possibly be counted according to either reckoning, Jn. 11:9 clearly counts according to the morning-Jewish view and Jn. 4:6 is strong for the same.<sup>164</sup> As it is unlikely that the same Gospel-writer would use multiple systems of time-reckoning unless there were clear indications that he was doing so (which there does not appear to be), there is reason to believe that John uses the morning-Jewish method throughout his gospel.

The strongest argument for John counting from midnight, at least in Jn. 19:14, is the reconciliation of this verse (saying that Christ's trial was not quite over at 'about the sixth hour') with Mk. 15:25 (which says that, 'it was the third hour, and they crucified Him'). If John was counting from midnight (in the context of the Roman court of Pilate),

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<sup>163</sup> *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book of the Gospel of John*, tr. William Urwick (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1895) in location. Regarding the history of the interpretation of Jn. 1:39, Morris observes: "The early commentators seem to have accepted without question that John used the same method as the other Evangelists. Thus Chrysostom speaks of 'the tenth hour' here as when 'the sun was already near its setting' (XVIII.3; p. 65)." *John*, 158.

<sup>164</sup> See this argued in J.C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels. For Family and Private Use. With the Text Complete. St. John, Vol. III* (New York: Robert Carter, 1878), 285, on Jn. 19:14.

then the trial was nearly over at 6 A.M. and Christ was crucified at 9 A.M., which makes for an easy reconciliation of these verses.

However, this view has difficulties of its own, nor is it necessary to the harmonization of these passages. For a survey of the numerous proposals that have been made in order to reconcile the time references of Mark and John about the crucifixion, see J.C. Ryle's *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* on Jn. 19:14. The proposal he prefers has been popular in Church history and adequately harmonizes the gospel writers on the assumption that both Mark and John were using the Jewish-morning reckoning.<sup>165</sup>

#### 4. The Buying of Spices in the Gospels

Taking for granted that the weekly Sabbath during Jesus' time was kept evening-to-evening, many versions of Scripture translate Mk. 16:1-2 so as to imply that the three ladies bought spices for Jesus' burial *after* the weekly Sabbath was over on Saturday evening, before Sunday morning. The KJV translates and punctuates these two verses in this manner:

“And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him.

And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.”

If that interpretation of the Greek text were the case though, it would be at variance with Lk. 23:54-56, which says that the ladies prepared the spices immediately after Jesus' crucifixion (on Friday):

It was the Day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was drawing near. The women who came with Him from Galilee followed, and saw the tomb and how His body was placed. Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.<sup>166</sup>

Rather, the meaning of Mk. 16:1-2 is best grasped with the insertion of explanatory parentheses:

And when the sabbath was past (Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome had bought sweet spices [earlier], that they might come and anoint Him) and

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<sup>165</sup> See also Morris, 801 and Ramsay, 457-459.

<sup>166</sup> Modern English Version (MEV). All various Bible versions in this article were accessed through Biblegateway.com.

very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.<sup>167</sup>

Not only is such a grammatical understanding of the Greek words possible (punctuation not being present in the original Greek), but such explanatory parenthetical statements are commonly used in the New Testament. While Luke had mentioned in some detail the buying of spices after Jesus' crucifixion, Mark had not, and hence Mark gives the information in parenthesis in Mk. 16:1-2 in order to fill in the reader as to the purpose of the ladies' trip.<sup>168</sup>

'The Sabbath was drawing near', Lk. 23:53

Lk. 23:53 may appear at first glance as one of the strongest verses in the Bible for an evening-to-evening Sabbath, though the time-indicator in the verse is capable of a number of different senses. Above we quoted the verse from the MEV, translating it as: "It was the Day of Preparation,<sup>169</sup> and the Sabbath was drawing near [*epiphosko*]."

*Epiphosko*, while being used frequently in classical Greek,<sup>170</sup> is only used one other time in the New Testament.<sup>171</sup> It may be, and is translated in Lk. 23:53 in three different ways by various Bible translations:

- (1) 'drew on' (KJV, ASV), the Sabbath having already started, continued on;
- (2) 'was beginning' (ESV, NRSV), implying that the Sabbath started at that time;
- (3) 'drawing near' (NKJV, MEV), that the Sabbath was about to begin;

Translations (1) and (2) assume and imply an evening-to-evening Sabbath; (3) does not. Translation (1), that the Sabbath had already begun and was continuing, is unlikely, as, if it was the Preparation Day before the Sabbath (as the verse says), then it was not yet the Sabbath; and if it was the Sabbath, then it was not the Preparation Day to the Sabbath.

If translations (1) or (2) were the case, that the Sabbath had begun or began at that time, this would have involved the ladies, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus

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<sup>167</sup> Note how this reading is consistent with Lk. 24:1.

<sup>168</sup> See David Brown affirm that Lk. 23:54-56 gives the correct chronology and see him explain the KJV's translating of the Greek word 'bought' as 'had bought' in order to soften out this issue: Jameson, Fausset, Brown, *Commentary*, on Mk. 16:1.

<sup>169</sup> That is, the day before the weekly Sabbath (Friday), in which the Jews used to prepare for the Sabbath (see Ex. 16:5; Mt. 27:62; Mk. 15:42; Jn. 19:31,42).

<sup>170</sup> See Hans Conzelmann, "φοσ... επιφωσκω," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. IX, edited Kittel & Friedrich (Eerdmans, 1974) 310-358.

<sup>171</sup> In Mt. 28:1 for 'began to dawn' in the KJV, which verse will be important below.

doing a large amount of work on the Sabbath (which was prohibited). The Gospels record that, at, and after, this time:

(1) Joseph gained access to the court of Pilate and 'craved the body of Jesus' (Mk. 15:43).

(2) A message was sent to and from the centurion who was in charge of supervising the ongoing crucifixion in order to verify that Christ was dead (Mk. 15:44-45, or the centurion was actually called into the physical presence of Pilate and hence had to travel thereto). Having been responsible for, and a witness to, the Crucifixion (Mk. 15:39), the centurion at this time was more than likely at Golgotha, outside the city.

(3) Joseph then left the court of Pilate and bought (a significant amount of) fine linen strips in order to wrap the body of Jesus (Mk. 15:46). As commerce is forbidden on the Sabbath (Neh. 10:31; 13:15-23), this not only would have been a morally unlawful action, but there very well may not have been any sellers open for business (if an evening-to-evening Sabbath was being practiced through society).

(4) Nicodemus came and brought with him a 70 pound weight<sup>172</sup> of burial spices (a very large amount, fit for royalty). Carrying this, or having an animal pulling such a weight, would have been contrary to the Lord's command to 'bear no burden on the sabbath day' and to not have any of one's animals to work on that day (Jer. 17:21-22,27; Ex. 20:11).

(5) Joseph returned to the site of the crucifixion outside of Jerusalem to remove the body of Jesus from the cross (Mk. 15:46). The nails had to be carefully removed from Christ's hands and feet before the body could be lowered from the cross.<sup>173</sup>

(6) Then 'they', at least Nicodemus and Joseph, but probably with more persons, prepared the body 'as the manner of Jews is to bury' (Jn. 19:40). The process involved a thorough washing of Jesus' body and mixing spices in-between each layer of the linen-strips in which Jesus' body was wrapped. Anyone familiar with taking care of infirm persons will be familiar with how much work this involves, especially by those who do not do it often.

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<sup>172</sup> Jn. 29:39. The KJV's translation, '100 pound weight,' is an interpretation; see Morris, 825-6.

<sup>173</sup> So as not to rip through or pulverize his hands and feet, this possibly being done in the air while his body was hanging from those nails. Compare Ps. 22:16-17; 34:20; Jn. 19:36; 20:27.

(7) Jesus' prepared body (a heavy object to transport) was now taken to the tomb nearby and a large stone was rolled in front of the entrance, probably by numerous men (Mk. 15:46; 16:3-4; Jn. 19:41).

(8) The ladies, having followed and watched where Jesus' body was entombed, 'returned, and prepared [further] spices and ointments' (Lk. 23:56), which they intended to anoint Jesus' body with after the Sabbath. Mk. 16:1-2 says that they had 'bought' these spices. As they had prepared them Friday evening, the spices must have been purchased at that time.<sup>174</sup>

If the Sabbath had already begun before all of these actions, the group of disciples did *a lot* of work on the Sabbath. Yet, at the end of all these events, in contrast to them, Lk. 23:56 says that the ladies 'rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment.'

This burial-preparation work cannot be considered to have been a work of necessity or of mercy,<sup>175</sup> because, if so, the ladies seeking to anoint Jesus' body with spices on Sunday morning would have been a lawful exception as well. Yet, the ladies deliberately waited till the Sabbath was past (Mk. 16:1-2) before coming to anoint Jesus' body further with spices. Hence, the ladies understood these actions as not consistent with keeping the Sabbath Day unto the Lord.<sup>176</sup>

Translation (3) of Lk. 23:53, that the Sabbath had not yet started, but was drawing near, is how the majority of Bible translations translate the key, Greek word.<sup>177</sup> This translation grammatically allows that the Sabbath started on Friday evening or that it started Saturday morning.

However, taking this verse to mean that the Sabbath started in the evening involves a serious time crunch. The Gospels say that darkness covered the land while Christ was still alive on the cross from roughly noon till 3 P.M. (Mt. 27:45; Mk. 15:33)<sup>178</sup> After this, Christ gives multiple of his last sayings, is derided by the people, including having vinegar forced on Him, and then He dies. The Jews besought Pilate that the crucified persons' legs might be broken. The soldiers, in performing this find Jesus

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<sup>174</sup> It is unlikely that the ladies, following Jesus from Galilee, and He receiving a triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, would have bought the spices earlier in preparation for Jesus' death, the events leading thereto falling out very quickly.

<sup>175</sup> Which are Biblical exceptions to work allowed on the Sabbath (Mt. 12:1-13; WCF 21.8).

<sup>176</sup> Which is a good reason not to have funerals on the Sabbath, if the Christian disciples rightly did not even for the death of the Son of God in the flesh.

<sup>177</sup> Including the AMPC, CSB, CEB, CEV, CJB, GNT, HCSB, KJ21, LEB, MSG, MEV, MOUNCE, NABRE, NASB, NIRV, NIV, NIVUK, NKJV, NLV, NLT, TPT, TLV, WE, WEB, YLT. See <https://www.biblegateway.com/verse/en/Luke%2023:53>

<sup>178</sup> As all the gospel accounts concur as to when this darkness lifted and as to the events which happened after it, the end limit of this time reference is likely to be rather definite, as opposed to indefinite with the same surrounding events being recorded by different writers both before and after it.



already dead and pierce his side for good measure. (Jn. 19:31-36) Around this time, an earthquake breaks out, the veil in the Temple is rent in twain and “the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose... and went into the holy city and appeared unto many.” Upon all of this, the centurion and the crowd confess that “Truly, this was the Son of God.” (27:52-53) In accordance with this, “all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned,” with others ‘beholding these things.’ (Lk. 23:48-9)

Only after all of this, some time elapsing, do the gospel writers continue their narrative with: “and when the even was come...” (Mt. 27:57; Mk. 15:42) Some commentators, in order to palliate the time crunch, state that this ‘evening’ was the very earliest when the Jews ever reckoned the evening, namely 3 P.M. However this is contrary to the chronology of the previous events, which must have taken a substantial amount of time. It was now probably at least 4:30 P.M. (or later) when Mk. 15:42 and Mt. 27:57 say that ‘the even was come,’ ‘even’ being used in its more normal designation.<sup>179</sup> Only at this point do the eight items enumerated above with Joseph, Nicodemus and the ladies begin to occur in sequence.

Most scholars place Jesus’ death in the first week of April and estimate that sunset occurred in that year between 5:00 and 5:30 P.M. A slightly later reckoning between 5:58 and 6:02 may be estimated if one infers that sunset happened then at roughly the same time as it did in 2018. Using the same method, twilight<sup>180</sup> would have ended between 7:23-7:27 P.M.<sup>181</sup>

With a careful consideration of all the details, personal communications and distances involved, it is likely that most or all of the eight items enumerated above would probably have taken at least a half hour each (if not significantly longer) to accomplish, if everything went as efficiently as possible.<sup>182</sup> Thus the combined, eight actions would have taken a minimum of four hours, putting their completion time at around 8:30 P.M. (or significantly later), well after sunset and twilight. That all of these actions were completed before sunset or twilight seems impossible.

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<sup>179</sup> Broadus, in plain honesty, without trying to reconcile anything, gives the time as ‘towards sunset’, around 6 P.M. (on Mt. 27:57).

<sup>180</sup> “Evening civil twilight begins at sunset and ends when the geometric center of the sun reaches 6° below the horizon... Under clear weather conditions, civil twilight approximates the limit at which solar illumination suffices for the human eye to clearly distinguish terrestrial objects. Enough illumination renders artificial sources unnecessary for most outdoor activities. At... civil dusk sunlight clearly defines the horizon while the brightest stars and planets can appear.” Wikipedia [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twilight#Civil\\_twilight](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twilight#Civil_twilight)

<sup>181</sup> Not counting Daylight Savings Time. TimeandDate.com <https://www.timeanddate.com/sun/israel/jerusalem?month=4&year=2018>

<sup>182</sup> Which normally doesn’t happen.

Nor are we left to an estimated, detailed reconstruction of the events following Christ's death in order to determine the issue at hand. If the Sabbath started in the 'evening', the gospel writers plainly tell us when they considered the 'evening' to have begun (Mt. 27:57; Mk. 15:42). Most Bible versions translate the time reference in these two verses as past tense,<sup>183</sup> 'evening' having already come when all of these events were taking place. According to Mk. 15:42, "when the even was come... it was the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath." Note that in this verse, the 'day' is reckoning that evening with the previous daylight (a natural day), and in the 'evening' it is still the day before the Sabbath, and not the Sabbath itself.

We have established that: (1) evening had already started at the beginning of the actions of the small group of disciples seek to bury the body of Jesus, (2) that it was not possible for all of these actions to happen before sunset or twilight, and that they likely continued past 8 P.M. into the night,<sup>184</sup> (3) that many of the actions done would have been a breaking of the Sabbath, (4) that in the evening it was still the day before the Sabbath, Mk. 15:42 reckoning according to natural days, and that (5) Lk. 23:54 must be translated that 'the Sabbath drew near'. Hence, (6) this necessarily means that the Sabbath, according to these Scriptures, did not start in the evening but began on Saturday morning.

In confirmation of this, Mt. 27:62 says that "Now *the next day, that followed the day of the preparation*, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate" seeking to take precaution against the disciples stealing away Jesus' body. This took place not on Friday evening, but on Saturday, which the verse calls 'the next day'.

This interpretation of these Gospel passages is also verified by the overwhelming number of Scriptures which support a morning-to-morning reckoning of the Sabbath. If Lk. 23:54 implied that the beginning of the Sabbath was in the evening, this would be the only verse in the Bible to do so. However, it is safer to interpret Scripture with Scripture rather than against Scripture. In addition to this, the extra-Biblical evidence surveyed already is enough to show that the morning to morning view of the Sabbath (as practiced by the sacrificial system of the Temple) must have been well-known and

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<sup>183</sup> In Mk. 15:42 the Greek verb is an aorist participle, which is usually used to 'suggest antecedent time to the main verb (i.e., past time in a relative sense).' More particularly, 'when the aorist of such stative verbs is used', as in this verse, 'the emphasis is more frequently on the entrance into the state.' Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 555-6. In Mt. 27:57 the Greek verb is a present participle, signifying a contemporaneous time with that which follows, meaning that the actions took place when the evening was present.

<sup>184</sup> As the ladies 'returned' and 'prepared spices and ointments' in the comfort of their own home(s). (Lk. 23:56) Upon our reckoning, the account in Luke is naturally very tight. The ladies prepare the spices into the night, they go to sleep and rest the whole Sabbath day the following morning through Saturday night. Early in the morning on Sunday they get up and go to the tomb. (Lk. 23:56-24:1)

esteemed in Israel and an evening-to-evening practice of the Sabbath was not universal, or even necessarily dominant at that time.

The 'women', including Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of the disciples James and Joses, and Mary the mother of James and John of Zebedee (Mt. 27:56), who 'returned, and prepared spices and ointments, and rested the Sabbath Day according to the commandment' (Lk. 23:56), must have been intimately familiar with how Jesus and his disciples kept the Sabbath, going in and out amongst them for a few years or more.

How did Jesus celebrate the Sabbath? No doubt the answer must be according to Scripture, which He was intimately familiar with in striking detail (Mt. 4:4-10; 22:29,31-32; Mk. 12:24; etc.). Jesus, being the Word of God, rested as the Creator on the 7th Day of Creation from the dawn ending the 6th Day to the dawn ending the 7th day. As we are to keep the Sabbath after God's pattern at Creation (Ex. 20:11), and if Scripture is clear as to when the Sabbath begins (which it is), then there can be no doubt that Jesus kept the Sabbath morning to morning. Jesus reckoned days to begin with the morning in Mt. 20:2-9 and Jn. 11:19.<sup>185</sup> As Jesus observed the Sabbath with his twelve disciples and the many others that gathered with them day and night for three and a half years (not to mention Jesus' practice his whole life, which must have been known), there is no doubt that Jesus' disciples and the early Christians would have practiced and continued on in this same morning-observance.

Jesus was not one to follow the religious traditions of men. Rather, He publicly condemned them (Mt. 15:3-9) and taught his disciples to eschew such leaven of the Pharisees (Mt. 16:6). The disciples would have had no issue with buying and working on the evening before the Sabbath began. This being the case, the ladies would have had adequate time to prepare their spices all evening before the Sabbath began the following morning, as Lk. 23:55-56 naturally reads.

Two last Scriptures commonly brought to bear for an evening-to-evening view of the Sabbath during Jesus' time are Dt. 21:23, about a body not hanging all night upon a tree, and Jn. 19:31, about taking down the crucified bodies before the Sabbath day. However, nothing in these verses imply that the Sabbath began in the evening. Rather, they are perfectly consistent with the Sabbath beginning in Jesus' last week on Saturday morning.

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<sup>185</sup> "Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours in the day?'" It has always been common, as numerous secondary sources document and both Testaments of Scripture attest, for people to have colloquially spoken of the daylight hours as being the 'day' for pragmatic purposes (at the same time that the culture counted its calendar days by natural, 24-hour days). Our point here is simply that the day was considered to begin in the morning, not with the evening, which was reckoned 'night'. When the day was divided into the twelve hours of 'day' and 'night', Philo and Josephus (above) reckoned the day to proceed from 'day' to 'night' and not vice-versa.

## 5. The Resurrection

How do the Resurrection accounts reckon when the day began? Mk. 16:9 tells us that Jesus was resurrected at the beginning of the first day of the week, in the morning:<sup>186</sup> “Now when Jesus was risen early on the first day of the week...”

The Greek word for ‘early’ in this verse, as well as in the account in Jn. 20:1, is *proi* (πρωι). The Septuagint<sup>187</sup> commonly used *proi* to translate the Hebrew word *boquer*, meaning dawn. The Septuagint version of Genesis, translated well before the Gospel accounts were written (3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.), had widespread influence amongst the Jews and used *proi* to translate Gen. 1:5, where the dawn ends the First Day of Creation Week and begins the next day.

This explains how Mk. 16:2 says that “very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun,” (see also Lk. 24:1) and yet Jn. 20:1 says that ‘it was yet dark.’ The ladies arrived at the sepulcher at dawn, when it was yet dark and the first breakings of light were piercing through the darkness as the sun began to rise.<sup>188</sup> By the time the ladies told some of the other disciples and came back to the sepulcher, Peter was able to enter the dark, enclosed sepulcher and see the clothes lying inside (Jn. 20:6-7) by the sunlight beginning to creep in. Bacchiocchi provides approximate times for the solar events: “At Passover time the astronomical morning twilight began in the latitude of Jerusalem at about 4:00 a.m. and the sun rose at about 5:30 a.m.” (*Time of the Crucifixion*, 34)

Thus, Jesus rising at the beginning of dawn means that He did not rise on the 7th day of the week (contra 7th Day Adventists and various others), nor that He rose in the night (contra many of those who hold to an evening-to-evening or a midnight-to-midnight view).

Mt. 28:1 provides more specificity about the Sabbath ending, not on the previous evening, but in the morning at dawn: “In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher.”

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<sup>186</sup> Shepard is strangely, factually wrong: “That if any of the evangelists had intended a new beginning of the Sabbath at morning, that they would then have set down the exact time of the Lord’s resurrection; but none of them do this; they set down the time of other things to prove that Christ was risen, but not the exact time of the resurrection, for it is wholly uncertain...” Thesis 70.2.

<sup>187</sup> The Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament.

<sup>188</sup> Calvin: “The discrepancy as to the time may be easily solved. When John says that they came before daybreak, we must understand, that they had set out on their journey during the darkness of the night; that, before they came to the sepulcher, the day had dawned.” *Commentary on the Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ According to John*, on Jn. 20:1, bound with *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke, Volume Third*, tr. William Pringle for the Calvin Translation Society (Baker, 2003). “

Thus, according to Mt. 28:1, the ladies had begun their short trip<sup>189</sup> shortly before dawn when it was still the Sabbath-night and yet reached the sepulcher, according to Mk. 16:1, 'when the sabbath was past.' The implicit connection in the first two verses of Mk. 16 is significant: The ladies arrived at the sepulcher as soon as they could after the Sabbath had ended in order to anoint Jesus's body with spices:

And when the sabbath was past (Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him) and very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun.

If the Sabbath had ended Saturday night, why would the ladies not then have made the trip to anoint Jesus' body with spices? Shepard's reasons for this (Thesis 99) are manifestly weak; he concludes that the answer 'can not be certainly determined'. If the ladies had been fearful of making the trip after the evening on Saturday, they would have been fearful of making it in the dark early on Sunday.

#### Mt. 28:1 & Evening-to-Evening?

Is an evening-to-evening view of Mt. 28:1 possible? The verse says, "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre."

The Greek word translated 'in the end of' (*opse*) may also be translated 'after'. 'After' may refer to after the immediate end of something, or it may refer to after that thing ended a long while before. Shepard takes it in the latter sense (231), reckoning the Sabbath to have ended Saturday evening. The next phrase is translated by some as, 'the first day of the week drawing on [*epiphosko*]', meaning that the first day was continuing on from the evening before. *Proi*, translated in Mk. 16:9 as Jesus rising 'early' on the first day of the week, is alternately translated as 'in the morning' of the first day of the week, implying that the morning of the first day of the week was not early on that day, it having started in the evening. All of this is grammatically possible, so much so that Augustine thought an initial reading of Mt. 28:1 indicated a Saturday night Resurrection, but argued that it could also be understood as referring to Sunday morning, in keeping with the other Gospels.<sup>190</sup>

A standard Greek lexicon (Arndt, Gingrich, Danker, in loc.), however, rates the translation of *epiphosko* as 'draw on' in Mt. 28:1 as a 'perhaps' (and then translates the

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<sup>189</sup> Which was lawful on the Sabbath day according to Rabbinic law, and according to Jesus, Mt. 12:1; see also Acts 1:12.

<sup>190</sup> *Matthew 14-28 - Ancient Christian commentary on Scripture: New Testament*, ed. Manlio Simonetti (InterVarsity Press, 2002), in location.

verse as we have given it from the KJV). Note that nearly all Bible versions go against the minority, evening-to-evening translation of *epiphosko* in this verse. What is possible is not always probable.<sup>191</sup> As we have shown above, 'draw on' is not a contextually possible translation of the word in Lk. 23:54. Rather, we found that 'drawing near' (that used by most Bible versions) has been shown to be correct in Lk. 23:54, which coincides with the right understanding of the word here in Mt. 28:1.

Though the evening-to-evening reading of Mt. 28:1 is grammatically possible in an isolated context, such a reckoning of days and the Sabbath goes against the whole mass of Scriptures that we have previously combed through which teaches a morning-to-morning reckoning. For this reason the evening-to-evening translation of Mt. 28:1, and attendant resurrection Scriptures, should be positively ruled out.

It would certainly be odd for Christ to have spent half of the Sabbath (a Day of life) under the power of the grave, and even more odd for later Christians to begin celebrating the Resurrection in the evening when Christ had not yet risen by that time. Rather, just as God had sovereignly sanctified the time of the 7<sup>th</sup> Day of Creation by his example by resting on it, so Christ sanctified the time of the 1<sup>st</sup> Day of the Week by rising from the dead and living and fellowshiping with his disciples on it.

The gospel writers reckoning the day to have begun with sunrise in their Resurrection accounts is significant. There is no indication that such a reckoning was new, or sprung onto the scene. They give it no explanation, nor make great note of it, other than that is when these things happened. Rather, it seems that the language and time keeping that the gospel writers narrate was well understood, assumed already and was continuous with what had come before (contra the view that the Sabbath was kept evening-to-evening in the Old Testament, but changed to morning-to-morning in the New Testament).

### Objection: 3 Days in the Grave

Shepard brings up the objection that the "Lord Christ could not lie three days in the grave, if the Sabbath did not begin at evening...", with Cotton arguing the same (Shepard, Thesis 100; Cotton, 96-97). They assume that, on their opponents' view, the third day would have begun with a full sunrise. Yet, Jesus rose when it was still dark. Hence, upon a morning-sunrise view, Jesus did not spend any part of the third day in the grave. This objection is easily solved in understanding, as we have, the day to start

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<sup>191</sup> Or to put it another way: what is unlikely is not likely the case. Most heretical interpretations of texts are grammatically possible in some way, though are not necessary or even probable to such verses, especially with further considerations from the larger Scriptural context which rule them out.

with dawn, with the first breaking forth of light immediately before sunrise, after which Jesus rose on this third day.

This objection, though, brings up a closely related objection<sup>192</sup> which unveils a significant issue to put on the table. It is sometimes said that, upon the view that the Sabbath begins in the morning, Jesus' rising so shortly after the beginning of Sunday morning could not fulfill the Scriptural requirement that "the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Mt. 12:40)

This issue of Mt. 12:40 in relation to how long Jesus spent in the grave, though, is not specific to the question of when the Sabbath begins, but rather, the issue is fundamental to Christianity itself in harmonizing the many varied, recorded, details regarding Christ's last week and the timing of his burial and resurrection. As discussions of this thorny topic have filled countless volumes throughout Church history, and as our article would not be complete without in some way addressing it, we will give, in the briefest manner, general directions to what we believe is the right answer.

All views on when the Sabbath begins are affected by how one understands the "three days and three nights" of Mt. 12:40. If such a short period of the day cannot be reckoned as a 'day', then, if Jesus was buried late, Friday afternoon, a sunset-to-sunset view of the Sabbath is likewise ruled out. The only way that the words of Mt. 12:40 could have been fulfilled literally (involving a full 72 hours in the grave) was if Jesus was buried Wednesday evening<sup>193</sup> and rose Saturday evening (which gives credence to an evening-to-evening Sabbath). Such a 'literal' interpretation of Mt. 12:40 is usually the starting point for advocates of the Wednesday crucifixion view.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Which Cotton and Shepard were orthodox enough not to advocate.

<sup>193</sup> Even here the fulfillment is not as literal as the words, as the phrase starts with 'days' of light and yet Jesus was buried at night, with 'days' following.

<sup>194</sup> Samuele Bacchiocchi describes this in *The Time of the Crucifixion and Resurrection* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 2001), 9, who argues against the 'literal' interpretation. [http://www.anym.org/pdf/the\\_time\\_of\\_the\\_crucifixion\\_and\\_the\\_resurrection\\_samuele-bacchiocchi.pdf](http://www.anym.org/pdf/the_time_of_the_crucifixion_and_the_resurrection_samuele-bacchiocchi.pdf) Such advocates are usually Seventh-Day Adventists (who keep the Sabbath on the 7<sup>th</sup> Day from evening to evening, believing that Christ rose at the end of the seventh day), some Messianic Jews, other seventh-day observing Christians (e.g. Church of God, Seventh Day; Worldwide Church of God; Church of God International, etc.), and some fundamentalist baptists who insist upon a 'literal' interpretation of Scripture. More orthodox advocates exist as well. The most well-known proponent of the Wednesday-Crucifixion view was Graham Scroggie, *A Guide to the Gospels* (London, 1948), 569-577.

### 3 Days in the Grave According to Scripture

However, to understand that the phrase in Mt. 12:40 must prescribe at least 72 hours in the grave is ahistorical and contrary to Scripture's own evidence. J.A. Alexander comments on Mt. 12:40:

"Three days and three nights" are to be computed in the Jewish manner, which applies that formula to one whole day with any part however small of two others. This is not an invention of Christian apologists, but laid down as a rule in the Talmud: one hour more is reckoned as a day, one day more as a year.<sup>195</sup> The existence of the usage may be seen by comparing the terms "after three days" and "until the third day" in [Mt.] 27:63-64... (See also Esther 4:16; 5:1).<sup>196</sup>

John Broadus points out that Jesus' oft repeated prophesy that He would rise 'on the third day'<sup>197</sup> indicates that "it would mean any time on the third day".<sup>198</sup> If that be the case, then Mt. 12:40 cannot be understood as teaching that Christ must rise *after* the complete third day, on the fourth day. Hence, Mt. 12:40 should be interpreted according to an inclusive reckoning, allowing for Christ being buried during any part of three days.<sup>199</sup>

#### The Majority Church History View: Christ Crucified on Friday

A main hinge upon which the issue of the timing of Christ's burial turns is how one harmonizes the synoptic accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke (which appear to easily agree with each other) with that of John (which may appear to be significantly different). The traditional, majority, Church history view, which will be argued for as the Biblical view, was that the Day of Crucifixion was on Friday. A significant portion of this view held, as we affirm, that Passover evening (the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan) was Thursday night, exactly when Jesus celebrated it.

#### The Day of Crucifixion on Wednesday?

The literal, 72-hour-view posits Passover-evening to be Wednesday evening, when, it holds, Christ was buried. This necessarily implies that Jesus kept the Passover

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<sup>195</sup> Thus when numerous kings in Scripture reigned for a month or two beyond a given year, they are reckoned to have reigned for that following year.

<sup>196</sup> J.A. Alexander, *The Gospel According to Matthew Explained* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1861) 344.

<sup>197</sup> Mt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Mk. 9:3; Lk. 9:22; 18:33; 24:7,21,46; 1 Cor. 15:4.

<sup>198</sup> John Broadus, *Commentary on Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1990), on Mt. 12:40. See him also on Mt. 17:1 and 27:63 ff. Broadus quotes further Talmudic evidence for this reckoning.

<sup>199</sup> For further arguments, see Bacchiocchi, *Time of the Crucifixion*, 13-18.



with his disciples on Tuesday, a day early, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of Nisan and not the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. While the Wednesday-Crucifixion-view may at first glance appear to line up with John's account (Jn. 18:28,39; 19:14,31,42),<sup>200</sup> it is fundamentally incompatible with the time references in the synoptic Gospels (Mt. 26:17,20; Mk. 14:12,17; Lk. 22:1,13-14).

### The Day of Crucifixion on Thursday & Multiple Calendars?

We also find significant problems with the Thursday-evening view of Christ's burial. In a modification of this view in the last century, contemporary scholarship has proposed that there were two different calendars being kept for the date of Passover at that time in Israel: one by the Pharisees and much of the common people (the synoptic writers being said to reflect this reckoning) and another by the Temple (this being reflected in John's Gospel). According to this theory Jesus kept the Passover, not on the evening of the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan as the Old Testament prescribed and as the Temple did, but, for circumstantial reasons, He observed it early on an alternative day (either Tuesday or Wednesday) in-line with the (claimed) Pharisaic, tradition.

However, as Alfred Edersheim notes, it is:

untenable... that Christ had held the Paschal Supper a day in advance... a supposition... impossible, since the Paschal Lamb could not have been offered in the Temple, and, therefore, no Paschal Supper held, out of the regular time.<sup>201</sup>

We find it to be even more untenable that it is supposed that Jesus, the Word of God, passed over his own commandment to keep the Passover on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan, as He prescribed it, in preference for keeping it according to a tradition of men.<sup>202</sup> This would have been a breaking of his own Scriptural Law (otherwise known as sin) and the Regulative Principle of Worship, that we are to worship God as He prescribes, and in that way only.

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<sup>200</sup> Though it doesn't. The Wednesday view takes the references to the 'Sabbath' (Lk. 23:54,56; Jn. 19:31) as referring to the Passover and references to the 'preparation' (Mt. 27:62; Lk. 23:54; Jn. 19:14,31,42) as to the day before the Passover instead of the view that the Preparation Day was the day before the weekly Sabbath (Mk. 15:42) and that same day during Passover week (Jn. 19:14). To see in detail why the latter view is correct, see Geldenhuys.

<sup>201</sup> *Life & Times*, 807. Jesus and the disciples would have had to eat without a passover lamb, or to have killed a lamb outside of 'the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel', contrary to Ex. 12:6 and Mk. 14:12.

<sup>202</sup> This observation is nearly never mentioned by writers on the topic (no doubt due to most writers on the topic not holding to the Regulative Principle of Worship), yet it helpfully rules out many or most views on the subject. Without the Regulative Principle of Worship so many views are left as theoretically possible that any sure conclusion can hardly be made.

God did prescribe a way for persons who were unclean at the time of the Passover to partake of the Passover, but it was not a day or two early, it was prescribed to be exactly in the second month on the fourteenth day (Num. 9:6-12; 2 Chron. 30). For persons who would not keep the Passover when God said to (many commentators holding this to be the case for Jesus and his disciples), Scripture says (Num. 9:13):

But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbearth to keep the passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin.

### The Synoptic Gospels & John Harmonized

If one takes the time references in the synoptic gospels as their starting point, the peculiarly, Jewish (and Biblical) language of John in his account of Jesus' last week, trial and burial *can be* harmonized, in full justice, with the synoptic accounts.<sup>203</sup> To see how John may be naturally and fully reconciled to the synoptics, see the works of Alfred Edersheim,<sup>204</sup> but especially the even more scholarly defense by Norval Geldenhuys in his "Excursus: the Day and Date of the Crucifixion" in his *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, 649-670*.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> 'That they might eat the passover' in Jn. 18:28, on Friday, refers not to the lamb of Passover night, eaten Thursday evening, but to the further festive offerings of Passover Week, described in 2 Chron. 35:8,16-18 with the same language. Pilate releasing a prisoner at the 'passover' in Jn. 18:39, likewise, does not refer to the daytime before Passover night, but the passover week (compare 'the days of unleavened bread' with the 'pascha' in the Greek of Acts 12:3-4), namely on the first formal day of unleavened bread (the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan). 'The preparation of the passover', when Jesus was crucified, in Jn. 19:14 (on Friday), refers to the Preparation Day before the weekly Sabbath when it fell during Passover Week. That 'Passover' may refer to the whole week of Unleavened Bread we have already seen from Dt. 16:1-4; Eze. 45:21; 2 Chron. 35:8,16-18 & Acts 12:3-4. The phrase, 'for that sabbath day was an high day' in Jn. 19:31 refers to the weekly Sabbath on Saturday, that year falling on the second day of the Week of Unleavened Bread, which was considered by the Jews to be just as much a 'high day' as the first day of Unleavened Bread. This language is reflected in the Talmud, though the specific language of a 'Preparation Day' before the Passover (which the Wednesday view entails) is not.

<sup>204</sup> "Did the Lord Institute his Supper on the Paschal Night?" and *Life and Times*, 806-7, 865-6 & 895-6, on Mk. 14:12-16 & Jn. 18:28; 19:14,31.

<sup>205</sup> Geldenhuys references other scholars who share the same view: Ubbink, J.B. Lightfoot, Theodore Zahn and E.W. Hengstenberg. 664. Bacchiocchi's book long critique of the Wed.-crucifixion view, *Time of the Crucifixion*, has some solid scholarship and is clear and easy to read, though, as a Seventh Day Adventist, the work is tainted with an evening-to-evening view of the Sabbath in both Testaments.

## The Passover on the Evening of the First Day of Unleavened Bread

Some persons cite Passover-evening being called part of the 'first day of Unleavened Bread' in the synoptic Gospels (Mt. 26:17,20; Mk. 14:12,17; Lk. 22:1,7,14)<sup>206</sup> as evidence for the day (or at least the ecclesiastical days of Israel) starting in the evening. However, as has been shown in our section on the Passover and the Day of Atonement in Part 1, this infrequent language of Passover evening being called the 'first day of unleavened bread'<sup>207</sup> was preceded by the Holy Ghost in Ex. 13:6-7 and in the irregular, colloquial language of the Old Testament in Dt. 16:2-4; Eze. 45:21; 2 Chron. 35:8,16,18<sup>208</sup> and was consistent with the alternate, calendrical and normal, natural day reckoning of the majority of Old Testament passages positing the first day of Unleavened Bread to be on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan after Passover night.<sup>209</sup>

There is no Biblical evidence that this unique and exceptional (Scriptural) festival language regarding the Passover and the Week of Unleavened Bread applied to any other Israeli holy days, to the Jews' regular days of the week or to the weekly Sabbath. Hence, there is no need upon this ground to resort to tenuous hypotheses of the Gospel writers reckoning holy days according to multiple, then-current, calendars.

Further the language of Mk. 14:12 stipulates not a reckoning of the first day of Unleavened Bread from the Passover in the evening, but rather reckons it as a natural day from the morning. The verse says:

And the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover, his disciples said unto Him, 'Where wilt Thou that we go and prepare that Thou mayest eat the passover?'

The verse says that the passover was killed on the first day of Unleavened Bread, yet the lamb would have been killed in the Temple around 3 P.M., a good while before sunset. Yet the assumption was that the disciples would eat the passover that same day, on the first day of Unleavened Bread, which only happened later in the 'evening'

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<sup>206</sup> This phrase has further confused scholars not familiar enough with the Old Testament, as some have taken it to mean that Jesus celebrated the Passover, not on Passover night, but on the evening of the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan (a day late). Hence further theories of multiple ecclesiastical calendars being kept in Israel at that time.

<sup>207</sup> Which evidently had become common amongst the Jews by the time of the New Testament.

<sup>208</sup> This is consistent with the term 'Passover' encompassing the whole Week of Unleavened Bread in the New Testament, Jn. 18:28; 19:14,31, Acts 12:3-4.

<sup>209</sup> Ex. 12:6,18; Lev. 23:5-6; Num. 9:5,11; 28:16-25; Josh. 5:10; 2 Chron. 35:1,10,16; Ezra 6:19 and Eze. 45:21. See Zeitlin show from the *Book of Jubilees* (2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.) that Passover being said to be held on the 'evening' of the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan in that book did not refer to the Passover being reckoned with the fifteenth, but rather entailed that 'eve', or 'evening,' meant the whole, natural day before the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. "Beginning of the Day in the Calendar of Jubilees," 154-155.

(14:17). The verses are clear that the evening (Mk. 14:17; Mt. 26:20; Lk. 22:14) was reckoned with the previous daytime (Mk. 14:12; Mt. 26:17; Lk. 22:7).<sup>210</sup>

Thus, we remain confident in the conclusion<sup>211</sup> that the evening of the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan was Thursday evening, when Jesus ate the Passover with his disciples, and that the phrase “three days and three nights” in Mt. 12:40 is compatible with the traditional, majority, Church history viewpoint that Christ was buried Friday evening and rose again Sunday morning,<sup>212</sup> this entailing the Sabbath starting in the morning.

## 6. After the Resurrection

Jn. 20:19

On Resurrection day, Jesus appeared to the disciples ‘the same day at evening, being the first day of the week’ (Jn. 20:19). This indicates that the evening after the daylight of the Resurrection was still the first day of the week, the Lord’s Day, and not the second day of the week.

The evening-to-evening view takes this encounter as happening in the beginning of the evening before sunset. That this encounter, though, likely happened at, or after, sunset appears from the following three considerations:

1. This encounter happened after the two disciples on the road to Emmaus sought to constrain Jesus to abide with them, for it was ‘toward evening, and the day is far spent.’ (Lk. 24:29) Jesus then ‘sat at meat with them’ and broke bread before He vanished. The two disciples then traveled the 60 furlongs (Lk. 24:13), or 7.5 miles, back to Jerusalem to tell the eleven disciples (Lk. 24:33). Even at the rate of a jog (roughly a 15 minute mile for over seven miles, if they could have sustained this), this would have added another two hours after ‘the day was far

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<sup>210</sup> If the whole natural day of the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan was then colloquially known as the first day of unleavened bread (though festivities only started towards the evening), this would mean that the natural day of the 21<sup>st</sup> of Nisan would be the seventh and last day of the festival, though the festival would end that natural day at sunset (as Ex. 12:18 prescribes). This colloquial language is very natural and might be expected. To give a modern example: A week-long, family conference begins on Monday evening. Once Monday morning comes, the kids are excited that the first day of the conference has come in anticipation of making preparations for the event the same day.

<sup>211</sup> This very brief discussion by no means exhausts our arguments for the traditional view.

<sup>212</sup> See even Bacchiocchi argue this in his short, book-length work against his own Seventh Day Adventist peers. *Time of the Crucifixion*.

spent'. It would seem that Jesus' Sabbath meeting with the eleven must have happened well after sunset.<sup>213</sup>

2. Shepard sought to alleviate this (Theses 59-62) by appealing to Judges 19:8-15, which uses similar time-references (especially vv. 8-9, albeit in Hebrew) for a mid-afternoon meal, providing a larger window for very similar events to happen in by sunset. Shepard likewise interprets the disciple's meal after the walk to Emmaus in this way. In Judg. 19:8, after such a mid-afternoon meal, the Levite, his concubine and his servant were yet able to travel from Bethlehem to Gibeah (about 12 miles) before the sun set. Thus Shepard seems to be able to make Jesus' visit to the eleven occur before sunset.

While Shepard's reading of the Greek time-references in Luke's account appears to be grammatically possible, yet his arguments also appear to be a case of special pleading: all of these circumstances have to occur in the precise way Shepard constructs them, pushing each time limit to its max so that all the events are able to occur just in the brink of time.

What Shepard does not take notice of is that in Jud. 19:14 the sun sets upon the Levite, his servant and his concubine, *before* they reach Gibeah while they were still on the main road before they turned off towards the city or entered the city, much more before they found lodging for the night therein (Judg. 19:15). The passage says that an old man came in from the field at this time after sunset (for he passed by the Levite's party in the streets of Gibeah), which time the passage calls 'evening' (v. 16). It is only well after sunset that the Levite's party lodges with the old man, stating that, 'they washed their feet, and did eat and drink' (v. 21). These further time-shortening constraints in the Judges' passage, by parallel, make Shepard's seeming solution to Jesus' intercourse with the eleven to happen before sunset, near impossible.

3. The intercourse by the Lord with the eleven disciples appears to have happened on the same occasion that Mark records a similar event when the eleven 'sat at meat' (Mk. 16:14 with Lk. 23:42-43).<sup>214</sup> The custom of the culture seems to have been to eat supper at or shortly after sunset.<sup>215</sup> On the evening-to-evening view, if sunset was occurring or had occurred during Jesus' intercourse

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<sup>213</sup> Calvin, probably more realistically, reckons that the trip took three hours, assuming a quick, sustained walk, and posits the meeting with the eleven in Jerusalem as happening around midnight. *Commentary*, 366, on Lk. 24:33.

<sup>214</sup> Note that the preparation of dinner and intercourse therein, as all things, takes time.

<sup>215</sup> See Shepard concede this: 236; so Gen. 19:1-3; Ruth 3:7; Ex. 12:6; 16:12; 18:12,14; Jud. 19:14-16,21; Mt. 22:10-12; Josephus, *Life*, 44; *War*, i, 17, 4.

with the eleven, this would have marked the second day of the week, contra Jn. 20:19.

For these reasons, not only is the morning-to-morning view the natural reading of this post-Resurrection appearance, but it appears to be the only plausible one.

#### Acts 20:7-11

The most important Sabbath reference besides Jn. 20:19 in the New Testament is Acts 20:7,11.<sup>216</sup>

And upon *the first day 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*... When he therefore... had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.

The implications of the time references as encompassing Sabbath activities on the evening on the first natural day of the week hardly need comment for the discerning reader. Note, though, three lesser noticed points:

(1) Paul's Christian fellowship with the saints, which had begun on the first-day Sabbath (and hence should naturally be reckoned therewith), lasted past midnight, even till the 'morrow' at the 'break of day', when Paul departed for other affairs (which implies that the Lord's Day lasted past midnight).

(2) On the evening-to-evening view, the assumption that 'the first day of the week' and the Christians' worship started in the evening posits that Paul spent much of the Sabbath the following morning and daylight hours in extensive travelling (20:13-16, apart from an immediate necessity), which is contrary to the purpose of the Sabbath (and is also known as sin). Shephard does not take notice of this deal-breaker when he addresses it in Thesis 31.

(3) The other evening-to-evening view of this passage which posits the first day of the week as ending that evening in Acts 20:7,9 (Thesis 64) makes the Christian worship to run far over into the second day of the week, which, though lawful, is not convenient for many busy persons. Nor does it fit the natural reading of the passage that the worship fit for the Sabbath occurs on the first-day Sabbath and it ignores that the 'morrow' is effectively defined by the passage as occurring at the 'break of day'.

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<sup>216</sup> For other instances of days being reckoned from the morning after the Resurrection, see above under 'A Survey of the New Testament'.

Edward Leigh relates from William Perkins that:

the night mentioned here was a part of the seventh day of Paul's abode at Troas [Acts 20:6]: for if it were not so, then he had stayed at least a night longer, and so more than seven days, because he should have stayed part of another day.<sup>217</sup>

## 7. Midnight-to-Midnight?

While the comprehensive mass of evidence from both Testaments presented above should be sufficient to rule out the midnight-to-midnight view of the Sabbath,<sup>218</sup> a few points deserve further consideration.

Starting with the Old Testament, much is sometimes made of the peculiar and infrequent phrase in Hebrew 'between the evenings'<sup>219</sup> as the time for the sacrifice of the Passover.<sup>220</sup> The Pharisees took this phrase to mean the period between the declining of the day and actual sunset (3-5 P.M.). The Samaritans and Caraites<sup>221</sup> took this to mean a period between sunset and midnight (about 9 pm), as do a number of scholars.<sup>222</sup> A midnight reference for the phrase goes against the context of a number of the Bible verses in which it is used and the phrase never has reference in Scripture to the weekly Sabbath.

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<sup>217</sup> Edward Leigh, *Annotations upon all the New Testament philologicall and theologiall* (London: W.W. and E. G. for William Lee, 1650), on Acts 20:7.

<sup>218</sup> "Others there be who do not begin the Sabbath at morning-midnight, but begin and end it at morning-light, at the rising of the sun, and the light of it; who indeed are assisted with better proofs and stronger arguments than any of the rest..." Shepard, Thesis 48.

<sup>219</sup> Ex. 12:6; 16:12; 29:39,41; 30:8; Lev. 23:5; Num. 9:3,5,11; 28:4,8 are all the Biblical references. The phrase is usually translated into English as 'at even'.

<sup>220</sup> The midnight-view takes midnight to be the referent between the two halves of the night. The angel of death passing through Egypt at the first Passover did so at this time, but that the Israelites were to kill and eat their sacrificial lambs at the same time on that night seems to cut the matter rather close, not to mention that the Passover being celebrated annually with the kids up asking questions that late is rather implausible historically.

<sup>221</sup> (fl. 750-1100) "A Jewish sect professing to follow the text of the Bible (*Miqra*) to the exclusion of Rabbinical traditions, and hence opposed to the Talmud." *Catholic Encyclopedia*, "Caraites" <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03329b.htm>

<sup>222</sup> E.g. *Cyclopedia*, "Evening" and BDB, "Erev", citing numerous authorities, as well as authorities for the former view.

## Mk. 1:35

A verse in the New Testament that is often insisted upon for a midnight reckoning,<sup>223</sup> being one of the strongest verses for that view, is Mk 1:35, speaking of Jesus: “And in the morning [*proi*], rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.” However, the word ‘day’ is not in the Greek, but is an interpretation of the peculiar Greek phrase that *proi* is used in.<sup>224</sup> *Proi* may mean the fourth and last watch of the night (3-6 A.M.),<sup>225</sup> being reckoned with the night, not the day. Hence it is not necessary that the verse is defining ‘day’ as starting before the morning, but rather, the verse could be translated as, “And, very early, even in the night, rising up, He went out, and... prayed.”

However, it is more likely that the peculiar Greek phrase did signify the beginning of the day when it was still dark and the horizon began to lighten in the few hours before sunrise, this being consistent with our thesis which poses the breaking of light at dawn to begin the morning. It is not likely that Jesus arose to travel and pray when it was yet pitch black out. Rather, the beginning of the lightening of the horizon at dawn may have been around 4:00 A.M., when someone would naturally get up very early to go out and pray. This peculiar Greek phrase in Mk. 1:35 is in fact regarded as equivalent by Luke in a parallel passage as it being the beginning of ‘day’: “And when it was day [*γενομενης δε ημερας*], He departed and went into a desert place...” (Lk. 4:42)

## Jn. 20:1, ‘it was yet dark’

The other most frequently cited proof-text in the New Testament for the midnight reckoning is Jn. 20:1, that ‘it was yet dark’ when Mary Magdalene came ‘early’ on ‘the first day of the week’ to Jesus’ tomb. The inference is made that the day must have begun before sunrise. However, as we have shown, the darkness of Jn. 20:1 is consistent with the first day being reckoned from dawn and the breaking forth of light. This verse does not necessarily, nor probably, entail a midnight-reckoning.

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<sup>223</sup> E.g. Price, “When Does The Sabbath Begin?” It is not clear that Price looked into the original Hebrew and Greek of the relevant scriptures when writing his article, as he does not refer to these languages or make other explicit determinations upon them.

<sup>224</sup> *Proi* normally means ‘early’ or ‘dawn’, the beginning of morning. However, the word in this verse is being irregularly modified (a contextual pointer) by two Greek adverbs meaning ‘very’ and ‘in-the-night’. Hence the phrase may give the meaning, ‘very early, even in the night.’

<sup>225</sup> *Proi* standing alone may refer to the fourth watch of the night (e.g. Mk. 13:35-36). This is probably because the whole watch takes on the name of the most significant event in that watch, in this case it being the dawn, which *proi* normally stands for. The verse certainly does not imply or allow that the ‘morning’ started at midnight.



## Peter Denying Jesus Thrice 'this day'

Mk. 14:30 and 14:72 confirm the regular rule of reckoning days in the New Testament:

And Jesus saith unto him [Peter], '*...this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice...*

And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, 'Before the cockcrow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.'

Jesus said in the evening (Mk. 14:17) of the Last Supper that Peter's prophesied three-fold denial would happen '*this day*' before the cock crew twice. About an hour and a half after midnight, the cock crew the second time,<sup>226</sup> Jesus reckoning the day till the morning, not till midnight. When the account continues in Lk. 22:62,66, the morning (and not the previous midnight) is said to begin the day: "Peter went out, and wept bitterly... And as soon as it was day [καὶ ὡς ἐγένετο ἡμέρα], the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together..."

## Conclusion of the New Testament

To summarize our findings from the New Testament: The Old Testament pattern of reckoning days morning-to-morning continues unabated into the Gospels and the history of Acts, that being the face-value, dominant pattern through the New Testament. The Temple (the most important official institution in Israel) counted hours to have begun at sunrise, as did Jesus, the synoptic-gospel writers and the author of Acts (Mt. 20:3-9; 27:45-46; Mk. 13:35; 15:25,33-34; Lk. 23:44; Acts 2:15; 3:1; 10:3). Mk. 1:21-32, about people bringing their loved ones to be healed by Jesus on Saturday evening makes for no explicit evidence for the Sabbath ending at that time. Nor ought it to be assumed that the common people were in compliance with many of the details of the teachings of rabbinism. The testimony of the Gospels themselves is often the opposite.

Both a morning and evening Sabbath may have been being practiced in Israel at this time. From the previously presented inter-Testamental data, it is likely that the common people may have been on the whole more loyal to the Temple and the

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<sup>226</sup> See William Lane's discussion, *The Gospel According to Mark: the English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 543. The cock crowing referred to the third watch of the night (Mk. 13:35, 12-3 A.M.) in which cocks in that location crowed three times at regular intervals: the first at 12:30, the second at 1:30 and the last at 2:30.

conservative, morning reckoning of the sacrificial system according to the Scriptures, whereas the Pharisees and rabbis, who were only a few percent of the population and were more greatly affected by Traditionalism, probably had a greater disposition towards an evening-to-evening Sabbath observance. How far or to what extent the evening-to-evening practice was observed in any given location in Israel, and by what persons during the time-period the Gospels treat of, cannot be adequately discerned. The most detailed evidence which we have is the information in the Gospels themselves, which evidence throughout their pages a morning-to-morning reckoning of days and the Sabbath.

Various civil and pragmatic reckonings of days are compatible our thesis, given that the Sabbath is observed from dawn-to-dawn. The common Roman reckoning of days was from sunrise, excepting legal documents and contracts. While there is dispute whether John reckons from midnight or from morning in his Gospel, we have found the Jewish-morning interpretation to be fitting and preferable.

The events surrounding the burial of Jesus, with the buying and preparing of spices and related circumstances, at and after the 'evening' when the Sabbath was 'drawing near' (Lk. 23:53), we have found to be a major hinge in the interpretation of the Gospels on this issue. We have also found that it seems impossible that the eight enumerated actions of the disciples (which would have broken the Sabbath) could have been done by sunset. Hence, these passages, we believe, teach with some force that the Sabbath started in the morning.

As the Old Testament, in its multitudinous details, is clear on the beginning of the Sabbath, and as Jesus is the Word of God and Creator, not esteeming the religious traditions of men (especially with regard to the Sabbath), we believe that He observed the Sabbath throughout his life from morning-to-morning, and hence his disciples would have been intimately familiar with this and practiced likewise.

The evening-to-evening reading of the Resurrection accounts hinges on a minority translation (read: improbable)<sup>227</sup> of *epiphosko* (normally translated 'began to dawn' in Mt. 28:1) as meaning that the Sabbath, from Saturday evening, 'drew on'.<sup>228</sup> In light of the rest of the teaching of Scripture as to when the Sabbath begins, this minority view may be safely ruled out, and the complexity of details in the Resurrection accounts strongly confirms that Jesus rose from the dead at dawn, just after the Old Testament

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<sup>227</sup> The strength of the morning-reckoning of Mt. 28:1 is seen in that Bacchiocchi, a Seventh-Day Adventist apologist, who keeps the Sabbath on the 7<sup>th</sup> day from evening to evening, yet takes a morning-reckoning of Mt. 28:1 and hence was compelled to adopt the co-existence view of the reckoning of days in Bible times, that days were reckoned from both (according to him) evening and from morning. *Time of the Crucifixion*.

<sup>228</sup> It also often involves the lady-disciples making a trip to the tomb on Saturday evening, which we have not bothered to confute.

Sabbath had ended, ushering in the Lord's Day. Jesus being buried Friday evening and risen Sunday morning, according to the traditional, majority view of Church history, is compatible with the 'three days and three nights' of Mt. 12:40 (per comparing these Scriptures: Esth. 4:16; 5:1; Mt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Mt. 27:63-64; Mk. 9:3; Lk. 9:22; 18:33; 24:7,21,46; 1 Cor. 15:4).

The only plausible interpretation of Jn. 20:19 is that Jesus met with the eleven disciples after sunset, on the first day of the week. The early Christians worshipping on the first day of the week in Acts 20:7,11 is also strong for the morning-to-morning reckoning.

With respect to the midnight viewpoint, while the English of Mk. 1:35 appears to reckon the day as beginning before daylight, this is not the case in the Greek. Nor would a one-time colloquial or pragmatic usage, of itself, overturn our thesis. The passage about Peter denying Christ three times before the cock crows twice (Mk. 14:17,30,72) is against a midnight reckoning and for a dawn reckoning. All in all, Gen. 1 and the mass of scriptural evidence following it, is against a midnight reckoning.

#### IV. Views in Reformed History

The predominant views on the subject (with variations) in the classical era of reformed history (1500's-1600's)<sup>229</sup> appears<sup>230</sup> to have been that in the Old Testament the Sabbath was reckoned either evening-to-evening or from midnight-to-midnight, and that during the New Testament era and following, the Sabbath was to be kept from the 'morning', which, if it was further specified, 'morning' was most often reckoned from midnight (often considering this to be indifferent according to civil custom).<sup>231</sup> The evening-to-evening reckoning in the New Testament was a minority position, mainly held to by New England puritanism (with important exceptions). The morning-to-morning view of both Testaments (inclusive of Gen. 1), sometimes defining the Sabbath as beginning specifically at dawn, was a respectable minority view in the classical era of reformed history.

The question of when the Sabbath began, though treated of, seemed to be underdeveloped in the classical era of reformed theology in comparison to its practical importance and the amount of literature on the Sabbath generally. Other reformed figures from later eras and the contemporary era will be included in this survey where their views have been made known, for the sake of completeness.

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<sup>229</sup> For sketches of Sabbath-observance in general throughout society during this time-frame, see Gilfillan, "The Sabbath at the Reformation" & "The Sabbath After the Reformation" in *Sabbath Viewed in the Light*, 405-465; Cox, *Literature of the Sabbath Question*, vol. 1, 126-269; vol. 2, 1-115; Micaiah Hill, *The Sabbath Made for Man: or the Origin, History and Principles of the Lord's Day* (London: John Farquhar Shaw, 1857) 409-434; James Dennison, Jr., *The Market Day of the Soul: the Puritan Doctrine of the Sabbath in England, 1532-1700* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008); Kenneth Strand, "Sabbath and Sunday in the Reformation Era" & Walter Douglas, "The Sabbath in Puritanism" in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, edited Kenneth Strand (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing, 1982); R.J. Bauckham, "Sabbath and Sunday in the Protestant Tradition" in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: a Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation*, edited D.A. Carson (Wipf & Stock, 1999). As there is not much practical difference in whether one keeps the Sabbath from midnight or from dawn, especially if one prepares the night before, it is not usually possible to discern from these histories whether post-Reformation society generally reckoned the Sabbath from midnight or from dawn; what is clear is that it was from the 'morning'.

<sup>230</sup> This survey only extends to figures that this author has come across in his researches; it may not be wholly representative. More research is warranted as the classifications here are based on limited evidence in each author where more may be available.

<sup>231</sup> Cotton: "...for some think that even the Jewish Sabbath began with the morning rather and though others yea the most grant that the Jewish Sabbath began with the evening and so was observed from evening to evening till the resurrection; yet after the resurrection they hold as the day of the Sabbath was changed from the seventh to the first so the time of the day was changed from the evening to the morning." 94. Due to the midnight-to-midnight view often using the language of accounting the Sabbath as starting from the 'morning', one often cannot safely differentiate the midnight-view from the dawn-view in historical usage without it being more specifically explicated by the author. According to the midnight-view, often, 'morning' began with the point at which the day began to grow towards more sunlight (midnight), and the evening started with the point at which the time of the day grew towards being more dark (noon).

Figures and works which held the Sabbath in the Old Testament to be from evening-to-evening<sup>232</sup> and in the New Testament to be from the ‘morning’ (without further specification) included: John Calvin,<sup>233</sup> Heinrich Wolf (Bownd, 130),<sup>234</sup> Nicholas Bownd (130-1, 360), William Ames, Lewis Bayly (both in Myers), George Abbot,<sup>235</sup> William Twisse,<sup>236</sup> William Fenner (Myers), John Richardson,<sup>237</sup> John Lightfoot (*Christian Sabbath*, 16, 28, 117-8), George Swinnock, Matthew Poole and, later, Alexander Whyte (last three in Myers).

The following persons also taught that the Sabbath from the New Testament is to be kept in the ‘morning’: Richard Greenham (Myers), Benedictus Aretius (Cleaver, 166-7, 174), Robert Cleaver (*Declaration of the Christian Sabbath*),<sup>238</sup> Henry Burton,<sup>239</sup> John Diodati,<sup>240</sup> Richard Baxter<sup>241</sup> and John Bunyan.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Such as the *Dutch Annotations upon the Whole Bible*, ed. Theodore Haak (London: Henry Hills for John Rothwell, Joshua Kirton and Richard Tomlins, 1657) on Gen. 1:5. A clear statement of their view on the beginning of the New Testament Sabbath could not be found.

<sup>233</sup> Calvin held that the Jewish Sabbath was from evening to evening (see his *Commentary* on Mt. 27:57; 28:1; Mk. 16:1) and that this was different than how it was celebrated afterwards.

<sup>234</sup> “But in our days the Lord enlightened the judgment of sundry burning and shining lights especially in our English Churches to see the necessity of sanctifying the Lord’s Day as a divine ordinance, who thereupon began soon after to consider and determine the time of the beginning and ending thereof, and most of them that have delivered their judgments touching this question, have followed the judgment of Wolphius, that the Lord’s Day is rather to begin at the morning than at the evening before.” Cotton, 108.

<sup>235</sup> George Abbot, *Vindiciæ Sabbathi, or, An Answer to Two Treatises of Master Broads, the one concerning the Sabbath or seventh day, the other, concerning the Lord’s-Day or first of the week: with a survey of all the rest which of late have written upon that subject* (London: Henry Overton, 1641), 36.

<sup>236</sup> William Twisse, *Of the morality of the fourth commandment as still in force to binde Christians delivered by way of answer to the translator of Doctor Prideaux his lecture, concerning the doctrine of the Sabbath* (London: E. G. for John Rothwell, 1641), 28, 117, 122, 147.

<sup>237</sup> John Richardson, *Choice Observations and Explanations upon the Old Testament* (London: T.R. and E.M. for John Rothwell, 1655), on Gen. 1:5.

<sup>238</sup> Cleaver quotes John Calvin, Theodore Beza, Immanuel Tremellius, Francis Junius, Benedictus Aretius, William Perkins and Andrew Willet in varying contexts for his position. Cleaver grants that Gen. 1 describes the evening-morning sequence but notes that Gen. 2:2-4 does not. Hence it is not a necessity to reckon the Sabbath this way. He then cites numerous, varying reckonings in the Old Testament. Cleaver held that the Jewish Sabbath was possibly from evening-to-evening, but leaves the question open.

<sup>239</sup> Henry Burton, *A divine tragedie lately acted, or A collection of sundry memorable examples of Gods judgements upon Sabbath-breakers, and other like libertines, in their unlawfull sports, happening within the realme of England, in the compass only of two yeares last past* (no place or publisher, 1636), 10, 12.

<sup>240</sup> John Diodati, *Pious Annotations, upon the Holy Bible* (London: T.B. for Nicholas Fussell, [1643]), on John 20:19, which exposition includes the evening as part of the first day of the week.

<sup>241</sup> Richard Baxter, *The divine appointment of the Lords day proved as a separated day for holy worship, especially in the church assemblies, and consequently the cessation of the seventh day Sabbath* (London: Nevil Simmons, 1671), 32, 43, 96, 99.

<sup>242</sup> John Bunyan, *Questions about the nature and perpetuity of the seventh-day Sabbath and proof that the first day of the week is the true Christian-sabbath* (London: Nath. Pond, at the Peacock in the Poultry,

Persons holding that the Sabbath in the New Testament was to be reckoned from midnight included: Columba (Gilfillan, 389),<sup>243</sup> Thomas Hooker, Samuel Stone,<sup>244</sup> Richard Bernard,<sup>245</sup> Daniel Cawdrey, Herbert Palmer,<sup>246</sup> Edward Leigh (on Acts 20:7), James Fisher, Ebenezer Erskine, John Willison, and later, Alexander McLeod and A.W. Pink (last five in Myers).<sup>247</sup>

The contemporary reformed writer Brian Schwertley has stated that he believes that while the Sabbath is from midnight in the New Testament, yet it was from evening-to-evening in the Old Testament.<sup>248</sup> Some held that the Sabbath was reckoned from midnight in the Old Testament, such as: William Pynchon (Cox, 478), William Gouge (Myers), James Durham (*Law Unsealed*, 247-251), Thomas Vincent, Thomas Boston, John Brown of Haddington and, later, Francis N. Lee (last four in Myers).<sup>249</sup>

Some persons holding to the midnight-view considered this reckoning to be normative from Scripture while others held the reckoning to be indifferent, it defaulting to the civil use of one's society (most of Europe during the 1500's and 1600's reckoned days from midnight). Persons who clearly held to such an indifferent-midnight reckoning for the New Testament were: John Wallis,<sup>250</sup> James Fisher, Ebenezer Erskine, John Willison and, later, Alexander Paterson (all in Myers).

Thomas Ridgley taught an indifferent, civil reckoning in both Testaments, holding that Israel kept it from evening-to-evening as their other days and that Sabbath-observance defaulted to midnight-to-midnight in the New Testament (Myers). John

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1685), 134. On p. 76 he speaks of Christ's conferences with his disciples on Resurrection Day from 'before day'.

<sup>243</sup> (521-597) The Irish abbot credited with spreading Christianity to Scotland.

<sup>244</sup> These last two figures were important New England, puritan, divines, who represented a significant difference of opinion from the more common, New Testament, evening-to-evening practice in that society. Edward R. Lambert, *History of the Colony of New Haven, Before and After the Union with Connecticut* (New Haven: Hitchcock & Stafford, 1838), 188.

<sup>245</sup> Richard Bernard, *A Threefold Treatise of the Sabbath* (London: Richard Bishop for Edward Blackmore, 1641). Also, Cox, *Literature of the Sabbath Question*, 206.

<sup>246</sup> Daniel Cawdrey & Herbert Palmer, *Sabbatum Redivivum, Or, the Christian Sabbath Vindicated*, Part 1 (London: Robert White for Thomas Underhill, 1645) 210.

<sup>247</sup> Erskine is here reckoned with Fisher as Erskine signed the preface to the first edition of the *Shorter Catechism Explained*.

<sup>248</sup> Brian Schwertley, "5. The time of the Lord's Day" in "The Christian Sabbath Examined, Proved, Applied," 40-42.

[http://www.reformedonline.com/uploads/1/5/0/3/15030584/christian\\_sabbath.pdf](http://www.reformedonline.com/uploads/1/5/0/3/15030584/christian_sabbath.pdf)

<sup>249</sup> The Old-Testament-midnight reckoning seems implicit in Brown of Haddington's quote; compare Boston before him who used the same language, but was more explicit.

<sup>250</sup> A minister and scribe at the Westminster Assembly.

Owen appears to only have considered daylight hours to have been included in the Sabbath (Myers).<sup>251</sup> Benjamin Keach, the calvinistic Baptist, agreed with him.<sup>252</sup>

Theodore Beza,<sup>253</sup> G. Wedley<sup>254</sup> and James Ussher (Myers) held that the Sabbath was from evening-to-evening in the Old Testament and from dawn in the New Testament. Samuel Rutherford said that the New Testament Sabbath was to be “set all apart from the dawning of the day until midnight (Jn. 20:1; Acts 20:7) for God’s service.”<sup>255</sup>

Men and works holding to the morning-to-morning view in both Testaments included numerous persons in the early-1600’s,<sup>256</sup> William Perkins (Myers),<sup>257</sup> John Ley (*English Annotations*, on Gen. 1:5), William Thomas,<sup>258</sup> John Flavel, and later on, William Plumer (last two in Myers), Melancthon Jacobus (on Gen. 1:5) and E.J. Young (89).

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<sup>251</sup> “A day of rest, according to rules of natural equity, ought to be proportioned to a day of work or labor, which God has granted to us for our own use. Now, this is to be reckoned from morning to evening: Psalm 104:20-23... Mere cessation from labor in the night seems to have no place in the spiritual rest of the gospel to be expressed on this day, nor to be by anything distinguished from the nights of other days of the week... the observation of the day is to be commensurate to the use of our natural strength on any other day, from morning to night, and nothing is hereby lost that is needful to the due sanctification of it...”

<sup>252</sup> *The Jewish Sabbath abrogated, or, The Saturday Sabbatarians confuted in two parts* (London: John Marshall, 1700) 266-269. The other possibility for Keach is that he reckoned it from midnight to midnight, but his last sentence seems to confirm Owen’s daylight view while the midnight statements may be interpreted consistently with this.

<sup>253</sup> Theodore Beza, *The New Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ Translated out of the Greek* (London: Christopher Barker, 1599), on Mt. 28:1: “At the going out of the Sabbath, that is, about day break after the Roman’s count, which reckon the natural day, from the sun rising to the next sun rising and not as the Hebrews, which count from evening to evening.” Beza translates the meeting of Christ with the eleven on Sunday evening in Jn. 20:19: “The same day at night, which was the first day of the week...”

<sup>254</sup> G. Wedley, *The Doctrine of the Sabbath, Handled in Foure Severall Bookes or Treatises* (London: Felix Kyngston for Thomas Man, 1604), 61-62.

<sup>255</sup> Samuel Rutherford, *Rutherford’s Catechism, Containing the Sum of Christian Religion* (Edinburgh: Blue Banner, 1998) 90.

<sup>256</sup> David Primerose, a French protestant minister, spoke of this view as held in his day: “Others will have it to begin by the morning, at the same time that our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and to end at the next morning; and there are some which hold, that the Jews ordered so their Sabbaths.” *A Treatise of the Sabbath and the Lords-Day Distinguished into Foure Parts...* (London, 1636) 288. Primerose held that the days of the Creation Week and the Jewish Sabbath were from evening to evening and that there is no moral obligation to keep a twenty-four hour day in the New Testament.

<sup>257</sup> Holding it to be according to an indifferent, civil reckoning in the New Testament.

<sup>258</sup> William Thomas, *A preservative of piety in a quiet reasoning for those duties of religion, that are the means and helps appointed of God for the preserving and promoting of godliness...* (London, 1662) 81. Thomas took the puritan view of the Sabbath and was an English rector of a church in Ubley, in the county of Somerset, England. Thomas mentions those who interpreted ‘morning’ to be from midnight, but does not include himself in that class; nor does he care to argue the difference.

An evening-to-evening Sabbath in the New Testament era was a minority view, held by certain canonists of the Roman Catholic Church,<sup>259</sup> the English Archbishop William Laud,<sup>260</sup> William Prynne (an English Erastian, Cox, 479), Thomas Shepard (“Beginning of the Sabbath”), John Cotton<sup>261</sup> and much of puritan, New England’s society in general.

Seeing that much of reformed theology during the 1500’s and 1600’s held that the Old Testament Sabbath was from evening-to-evening and that the New Testament Sabbath was from midnight, a few comments are in order for a partial explanation of this. Most of the reformed, Sabbatarian literature from that period is primarily concerned to establish the moral, perpetual nature of the Sabbath and the change of the day to the first day of the week in the New Testament. If this be established to their readers, their objective was largely met. The timing of when the Sabbath started was a tertiary question, usually only cursorily and fragmentarily addressed, if at all (many in-depth treatises on the Sabbath and Bible commentaries on relevant passages do not even mention it).<sup>262</sup> The only reformed authors we have found from that period to treat of the subject in some depth are (in order of descending length) Thomas Shepard (evening-to-evening), Robert Cleaver (New Testament: morning), John Cotton (evening-to-evening), James Durham (midnight in both Testaments) and John Owen (daylight). The topic did not receive the extensive, detailed treatment in that era which many other issues did receive, or that this issue deserves.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Bownd quotes some on 130, as well does Cotton, 105.

<sup>260</sup> Per John Cotton, *The Correspondence of John Cotton*, ed. Sargent Bush, Jr. (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2001) 409.

<sup>261</sup> ed. Bush, *Correspondence of John Cotton*, 389-91, 409-411 and “A Short Discourse of Mr. John Cotton Touching the Time when the Lord’s Day Beginneth, whether at the Evening or in the Morning” (1611) in *John Cotton on... the Sabbath*.

<sup>262</sup> This writer could not find the topic addressed in the works of the Westminster divines, George Walker, *The Doctrine of the Holy Weekly Sabbath* (London: G.M. for John Bartlet, 1641) 170 pp. and Thomas Young, *The Lords-day, or, A succinct narration compiled out of the testimonies of H. Scripture and the reverend ancient fathers and divided into two books* (London: E. Leach, sold by Nevil Symmons, 1672) 412 pp. Nor is the issue addressed in Edward Brerewood, *A Second Treatise of the Sabbath, or an Explication of the Fourth Commandment* (Oxford: Iohn Lichfield, sold by Thomas Huggins, 1632) or James Ussher, *The judgement of the late Arch-Bishop of Armagh and Primate of Ireland... 2. Of the Sabbath, and observation of the Lords day* (London: John Crook, 1658).

<sup>263</sup> Our article is much more thorough and detailed, quoting many more numerous scriptures than any we have met with from that era, or since. One reason for the lack of published focus on that issue during that era is probably due to the controversy involved in having to defend the Sabbath itself from many sides. If there was greater hegemony on the doctrine of the Sabbath in that era at large, it may be surmised that there probably would have been more literature on the question of when the Sabbath started. The topic of when the Sabbath begins appears to have been even more infrequently addressed in later reformed theology, probably due to a greater exacerbation of the same problem.



On Genesis 1, no writer from that period we have come across discusses the Hebrew in any detail,<sup>264</sup> much less the meaning of *boquer* (dawn). Even the most detailed discussions on the topic only treat of less than a third of the relevant Scriptural data on the subject.<sup>265</sup> The evening-to-evening view is frequently mentioned as the practice of the Jews, and we are afraid it is probably often assumed by many more authors without any mention thereof<sup>266</sup> (as in much contemporary scholarship). If a person fundamentally assumes that Genesis 1 (from a cursory reading of the English) taught an evening-to-evening Sabbath, and the Jews seemed to have universally practiced this (per much of the Talmud), then one is only left with the data of the New Testament (which is a lot less) for any practice otherwise. Naturally, with the Old Testament foundation taken away, conclusions from this data may be significantly less conclusive, often defaulting to an indifferent, civil reckoning (as many of the midnight advocates held).

Much of the historic, reformed argumentation was polemical against the evening-to-evening view in the New Testament (e.g. Cleaver), this argumentation being largely consistent with the dawn-to-dawn view. When writers came to specifically pin down midnight as the starting point, proof-texts become incidental and few and far in-between.<sup>267</sup> If some of the foundational men from that period<sup>268</sup> had adequately realized the dawn-to-dawn import of Genesis 1, shedding light upon the mass of all the Old Testament data with it, all of which was confirmed by the Resurrection, a dawn-to-dawn conclusion would have been easily and strongly drawn and that segment in the story of reformed historical interpretation may have looked very different.

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<sup>264</sup> Though some show themselves familiar in their treatments with the Hebrew underlying the English, such as Cotton and sometimes Durham.

<sup>265</sup> This is true of most contemporary scholarship on the subject as well, despite sometimes claims to the contrary. Nor are they as humble as Cotton; Cotton prefaces his lecture saying that he hesitates to dwell at any length on the topic due to his view being controversial.

<sup>266</sup> We have not seen any historic, reformed writers reference Jews who held to a morning-to-morning Sabbath.

<sup>267</sup> While midnight advocates have argued and asserted their view upon particular texts (most of which have been discussed in this article), we have found no sustained arguments from that period explicitly against the dawn-to-dawn view. The New Testament morning view, encompassing those holding it from midnight or from dawn, represented the accepted, dominant reformed position (hence, persons within that position weren't quick to argue against each other), whereas, if an opponent was found, it was the evening-to-evening view in the New Testament. George Hughes, a puritan, though he takes the evening-to-evening view of the Old Testament and a morning view after the Resurrection, shows himself reluctant to even address the issue due to the controversy and many opinions over it, as do numerous writers. George Hughes, *Aphorisms, or, Select propositions of the Scripture shortly determining the doctrine of the Sabbath* (London, 1670), 14, 129, 151, 297-301.

<sup>268</sup> Such as Wolf, Bownd and Cleaver. The discussion of the latter two on the topic is marked by much indefiniteness. There does appear to be a dependence from later reformed men on these early figures, as the later men often went no farther in their discussions than the earlier men and refer readers to them.

## Conclusion of the Whole

The clearest and strongest argument for a morning-to-morning Sabbath, we believe, is in the opening pages of Scripture: Genesis 1-2:4. The Hebrew word for 'morning', *boquer*, specially signifies dawn and never means the whole twelve hour period of daylight. Hence, from Creation, the days ended with dawn, when the next day began. As God rested from dawn to dawn on the First Sabbath, so the moral, Fourth Commandment says that we ought we to follow his example (Ex. 20:11).

The rest of the mass of the Old Testament testimony flows from the light of Creation week and is in consistency with it, confirming it. 40+ Old Testament verses reckon days from the morning. The Israelites practiced a morning to morning Sabbath in the wilderness at God's command in Ex. 16. The Fourth Commandment not declaring when the Sabbath begins assumes that the hearers already knew when it did begin, and that this practice should be continued. The prescriptions surrounding the Passover and the Day of Atonement (which were counted on the calendar according to natural days) had no bearing on the weekly Sabbath. Nehemiah shutting the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath is consistent with a morning-reckoning. There is no clear example of an evening to evening Sabbath in the Old Testament.

The New Testament, upon its face value, continues this natural-day mode of reckoning in over twenty verses. Hours of the day in the New Testament are consistently, according to the Temple practice, counted from 6 A.M. It has been shown that the small band of disciples buying and preparing spices on the evening of Christ's death is incompatible with an evening-to-evening Sabbath keeping. Mt. 28:1 specifies that the Old Testament Sabbath ended at dawn and Jesus rose from the dead at dawn, the beginning of 'the first day of the week'. Jesus rose, according to the Greek, on 'the First-Day Sabbath'.<sup>269</sup> Jesus held fellowship with the disciples on the Lord's Day evening (Jn. 20:19), just as the apostolic Christians would continue to do so with each other (Acts 20:7-11). The plain reading of this plethora of Biblical teaching rules out a midnight-reckoning.

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<sup>269</sup> "μῖαν σαββατων" The 'Sabbath' (singular) in the English New Testament, is, in the Greek, normally plural, which word was also the Jewish word for 'week'. The *English Annotations* on Gen. 1:5 comments, "for denominations are many times taken from the end, because thereby the thing is made complete: so the whole week is called by the name 'Sabbath', Lev. 23:15 & Mt. 28:1 because with it the week is wholly made up and fully finished." On the word 'Sabbath' being used in the Talmud for a week, and for similar expressions as in Mt. 28:1, see John Gill, *Gill's Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), on Mt. 28:1 and John Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica, Matthew - 1 Corinthians* (Hendrickson, 1997), on Mt. 28:1.

Not only has this morning-to-morning understanding of the Sabbath been held to by prominent and respectable figures throughout history, but the view has lately risen in popularity, not only amongst scholars, but amongst Jewish interpreters as well. That much of history has understood Scripture to teach an evening-to-evening reckoning of the Sabbath in the Old Testament in no way detracts from the clarity of Scripture on the point. Rather, much Biblical interpretation has been influenced both in the popular mind and in the scholarly world by the later, dominant, erroneous practice of the Jews, a superficial reading of Gen. 1 colored by English translations and a selective citing of (ambiguous) minority verses in Scripture and an unawareness, or neglecting, of the majority of Scriptural evidence on the topic. Hence, the evening-to-evening view has more often from the outset been assumed, rather than thoroughly investigated and found to be wanting.

The corruption of the Sabbath as beginning in the evening was likely consequent upon the calendar changes which happened during the inter-Testamental era with the rise of a rabbinic, Jewish Traditionalism,<sup>270</sup> though the Temple (and likely the common people) continued to reckon days as starting with sunrise. The witness of the Septuagint and Philo also evidence that there likely was a morning-to-morning keeping of the Sabbath by a significant portion of the Jews in the first century. It is possible that both observances were occurring during the Gospels' era, though no clear evidence of an evening-to-evening Sabbath occurs in the New Testament.

The strongest, clearly datable evidence for an evening-to-evening Sabbath occurring in Israel does not come from God's Word, but appears<sup>271</sup> to be found in Josephus, describing, by the time of the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., a public practice from the Temple of a priest blowing a trumpet at twilight every seventh day to signify the beginning and ending of the Sabbath. We have granted the basic honesty of Josephus in this passage, though there is always the possibility that this may not be a safe assumption.<sup>272</sup> Notably the evidence for this practice occurs after the preserving influence of Christianity had been banished out of Judaism for about a generation, Judaism being given over to (Mt. 23:38; Lk. 19:42-44), and devolving further into, their

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<sup>270</sup> The rise of rabbinism as an alternative popular authority to the Temple administration, and specifically the (sometimes even spiteful) Pharisaic rivalry to the Temple-associated Sadducees, gives evidence to such competing views and rising traditions within Israel which may have served as the foundation for such a rising, alternative, observance of the Sabbath.

<sup>271</sup> As this author does not have an exhaustive, first-hand knowledge of the Talmud, it is possible that an evening-to-evening Sabbath is attributed to rabbis living at the time of Christ or before in the Talmud (representing their personal views and observance), though this author has not come across such clear, datable examples presented in the secondary literature. Much more historical research into the first century on this topic is very much warranted. This article, regarding the extra-Biblical evidence, should only be regarded as an entrance into the subject.

<sup>272</sup> Critiques of Josephus, finding information in his histories not always to be accurate or finding it to be slanted, abound. Josephus' liability to be corrected is generally accepted by scholars.

traditionalism. How recent or ancient this practice of publicly signaling the start of the Sabbath in the evening was, its origins of how it came about, what societal factors were efficient in bringing it about, or how it coexisted with the Temple still reckoning its days, holy-day calendar and sacrifices according to the Scriptural rule of natural days, is not known.

Josephus's use of language throughout his histories, reckoning days, hours and the Sabbath according to natural days, is telling. It suggests that an evening-to-evening practice of the Sabbath in Israel was not original, nor had been around long enough, nor was of wide enough practice or influence to reshape the common use of language in the society (not even by Josephus himself, who was a Pharisee). This is in sharp contrast to the later Talmuds where days and the Sabbath, in common language, are reckoned from the evening.<sup>273</sup>

Evidence of such an evening-observance in Israel in Josephus is not surprising,<sup>274</sup> nor does it in the least diminish our thesis. We have clear, positive evidence in God's Word itself that the Jewish traditionalists had already corrupted the Sabbath in numerous ways (Mt. 12:1-8; Lk. 13:14-17), that there were great corruptions in the public, Temple administration itself (such as the turning of the outer courts of the Temple into a house of merchandise and commerce, Jn. 2:12-17; Lk. 19:45-46) and that Jewish leaders held numerous views and practices (sometimes of primary importance) contrary to Scripture (Mt. 15:1-6; 22:23-32; 23:5,16-22,23; Mk. 7:1-5,9-13; Acts 23:6-8), these things having some influence upon the people, the blind leading the blind (Mt. 15:14). So far from this influencing the Teacher of Christianity, Jesus responsively exclaimed: "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures!" (Mt. 22:29; Mk. 12:24)

The Word of God, and not the observances of men (Mt. 15:3,9), is the rule of our belief, devotion and practice. If it could be shown clearly by extra-Biblical evidence that a majority of Israel practiced an evening-to-evening Sabbath at any point in her history it would not in the least disturb us, as when the Church has often and routinely gone against the Word throughout her history (as recorded throughout Scripture, in ecclesiastical history and as it is in our own day), it is not the Word of God that gives way. Rather, there will come the "removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." (Heb. 12:27)

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<sup>273</sup> The phrase, the 'eve' or 'evening of the Sabbath' ערב שבת commonly occurs in the Talmud, though never occurs in Scripture. Talmon, "Reckoning the Sabbath," 13.

<sup>274</sup> It only adds some more specifics to what the Talmud already claimed. Persius (34-62 A.D.), the Roman poet, "describes a Jewish Sabbath beginning on Friday evening with lamp-lighting and a meal..." Heather McKay, "Sabbath and Synagogue: the Question of Sabbath Worship in Ancient Judaism," (Boston: Brill, 2001) 129.

It may be noted that we have not spoken to the issue of peoples living in a geographical area where there are extraordinary stretches of daylight, darkness or other factors which may significantly affect the reckoning of days (such as in the arctic, outer-space, etc.).<sup>275</sup> Extraordinary cases ought not to form a rule, but rather be accommodated as exceptions to the rule (upon applicable principles of equity), where need be.

While we have affirmed that other modes of time-reckoning besides from sunrise are morally lawful and often pragmatically useful, especially in living in civil societies that often reckon time differently, yet we still find Scripture to oblige keeping the Sabbath from dawn-to-dawn,<sup>276</sup> per the normative example of God during Creation Week (Gen. 2:2-4) and the Fourth Commandment exhorting us to follow this example (Ex. 20:8,11). The beginning and ending of the Day which God positively<sup>277</sup> sanctified with his resting thereon and his blessing is not indifferent or to be relegated purely to civil custom.<sup>278</sup>

As we seek to humble ourselves below, and in conformity unto God's Will revealed in the rule of Scripture, may we observe and spiritually enjoy the Sabbath in our hearts and lives from dawn until dawn, in honor of the Lord of the Sabbath, the Sun of Righteousness, who on that day, lovingly, rose from the dead for our eternal salvation. To Him be glory and honor forever!

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<sup>275</sup> This issue affects most of the different views equally. Even an indifferent civil reckoning may be affected if the Sabbath does not divide up to one-seventh of the week). For fodder on the topic about the arctic, see Bacchiocchi, *Time of the Crucifixion*, 63-72, who, as a Seventh Day Adventist, reckons the Sabbath from the evening on the seventh day.

<sup>276</sup> Our purpose in this paper of putting persons in the right ballpark, to start the Sabbath in the morning, is the main thing that we have intended. Whether society could generalize a uniform starting time of the first day of the week at say, 6 A.M. (as the Jews practiced), though it may differ a small amount from dawn at any given time in the year (and similar matters), based upon principles of societal equity, though an interesting and practical question, is beyond our purpose to delineate or debate. Nearly every view of when the Sabbath starts is subject to such questions.

<sup>277</sup> Note that, while the obligation to devote a due proportion of time to the Lord is taught by natural principles, the specific selection of what time that should be has been sovereignly appointed by God (see WCF 21.7). Hence, not only has the beginning and ending of this time necessarily been appointed by God, but it is to be looked for in the Word. God positively began and ended his rest at specific times, which are the book-ends for the time that He sanctified unto Himself, and the Word tells us what those times were. That God has not left the beginning of the Sabbath indifferent, see this further argued well by Shepard, 216.

<sup>278</sup> Persons with non-traditional, daily work schedules are not excepted. Unusual work schedules are often used as an unthinking excuse not to keep the Sabbath, but a main characteristic of the Sabbath, God says, is that "in it thou shalt not do any work". (Ex. 20:10)

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