

# WHEN DOES A DAY BEGIN ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE - AND WHEN DOES THE SABBATH DAY BEGIN? SUNSET OR SUNRISE?

[www.end-times-prophecy.org](http://www.end-times-prophecy.org)



Today in the civil world a day begins at midnight and this is the standard by which many people live. But we know this isn't the Biblical way of starting a new day. It was simply introduced by man and there is no evidence in the Bible to support a midnight start for a new day. So what is the truth? What does the Bible teach us regarding this? Well, even though the Jews for millennia have been observing the sunset to sunset model for a day, there are many today who now hold to the belief that a new day (24-hour period) begins at dawn/sunrise. So the only two options are sunset to sunset, or dawn to dawn. Let us see what the Bible says.

*Genesis 1:1-5 ...'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and DARKNESS was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.'*

The proponents of the 'day starts at dawn' theory say that the first act of God and the first 'day' of creation was in God making light, hence they say that a day [24-hour period] starts with light [dawn]. But this theory falls down straight away, because as we can see from the verses in Genesis 1:1-5, the **very first** act of God was in creating heaven and earth. The earth was already there when God said 'let there be light,' because Genesis 1 says that God created the heaven and earth BEFORE He brought light to it. And we see that the very first part of that creation was covered in **darkness**. Darkness, which God called 'night' was the very FIRST part of the earth in the beginning and the very FIRST part of the first day, which is evidently why God says "the evening and the morning were the FIRST day." Do you see? Darkness was over the earth FIRST and was part of that first day of creation. Thus a day from there onwards would begin at evening:

*Genesis 1:8 ...'And the evening and the morning were the second day.'*

*Genesis 1:13 ...'And the **evening** and the morning were the third day.'*

*Genesis 1:19 ...'And the **evening** and the morning were the fourth day.'*

*Genesis 1:23 ...'And the **evening** and the morning were the fifth day.'*

*Genesis 1:31 ...'And the **evening** and the morning were the sixth day.'*

The very first state of this world was in darkness, which God called 'night' [evening], and God created light as the second part of that first day, which is why God labels a 24-hour day as 'evening and morning.' This is the order from the very beginning and cannot be changed by man.

Now those who hold to the 'day begins at dawn' theory try to say that God is not including the 'evening' in the day. What they try to make Genesis 1 say is that the evening is past and **the morning** is the first day, second day, etc. Now we could spend eternity philosophizing over God's word, but that will only lead, as it has led so many over history, to reject the plain truth of God, in favour of the so called 'wisdom' and 'philosophy' of man. So we are on much safer ground by taking God's word as it reads, and as it reads, the evening is the first part of a day according to Genesis 1.

Can you imagine God condemning people for keeping the Sabbath from evening to evening due to the clear order of days in Genesis, and God saying "*well, I didn't really mean what I said in Genesis.*"? It is Satan who says ... "*did God really say that?*"

*"I saw it was even so, 'From even unto even shall ye celebrate your Sabbath.'* Said the angel, *'Take the word of God, read it, understand, and ye cannot err. Read carefully, and ye shall there find what even is, and when it is ... I saw that it was in the minds of some that the Lord had shown that the Sabbath commenced at six o'clock, when I had **only seen that it commenced at even.**'* (Spiritual Gifts, Volume 4b, p.3, also Testimonies, Vol.1, p.116)

*"It is generally known to most of the readers of the Review that for several years in the early history of Seventh-day Adventists, believers adopted six o'clock as the time for the Sabbath to commence and close. It is also known that in the autumn of 1855, the Review taught that **sunset** was the Bible time to commence the Sabbath, and that our people generally changed from six o'clock to sunset ... The six o'clock time was called in question by a portion of believers as early as 1847, some maintaining that the Sabbath commenced at sun-rise, while others claimed Bible evidence in favor of sunset ... Mrs.W. has in **two visions** been shown something in regard to the time of the commencement of the Sabbath.. The first was as early as 1847, at Topsham, Me. **In that vision she was shown that to commence the Sabbath at sunrise was WRONG.** She then heard an angel repeat these words, 'From **even unto even** shall ye celebrate your Sabbaths.'" (James White, p.168, Review and Herald, Feb.25, 1868 - See original [HERE](#))*

Please note: A vision from God is equal to a "*thus saith the LORD.*"

But is what we find in Genesis all the Biblical evidence we have for a day beginning with evening? No. Let us take a look at some more Biblical evidence:

*Leviticus 23:5 ...'In the fourteenth day of the first month **at even** is the Lord's passover.'*

*Leviticus 23:27,32 ...'Also on the **tenth day** of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement ... **It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.**'*

Can you see what God is saying above? The day of atonement was one day, the **tenth day** of the seventh month. And God says that this day shall be a sabbath rest. Ok, so the **tenth day** is to be a sabbath rest, the day of atonement. God then says exactly when this was to begin and end - the **evening** of the ninth day, from **evening unto evening**, this tenth day sabbath rest was to be kept. Do you see it? This tenth day sabbath was to span from the evening of the ninth day until the evening of the tenth day. This means the evening of the ninth day was the **beginning** of the tenth day. The same with Passover. It began at evening. And this matches perfectly with the order God set out at creation. The word 'even' in 'even unto even' is the same word as 'evening' in Genesis 1. If the feast day sabbaths were to be observed from evening to evening, why would the weekly sabbath be any different, when the weekly sabbath points back to creation and we have the clear order of days being laid out as 'evening and morning'?

Remember that! The weekly Sabbath points back to creation week and the clear order of days in creation week is 'evening - morning.'

*Leviticus 22:6-7 ...'The soul which hath touched any such shall be unclean **until even**, and shall not eat of the holy things, unless he wash his flesh with water. And **when the sun is down, he shall be clean**, and shall afterward eat of the holy things; because it is his food.'*

*Deuteronomy 16:6 ...'But at the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover **at even, at the going down of the sun**, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt.'*

Joshua 10:26-27 ...'And afterward Joshua smote them, and slew them, and hanged them on five trees: and they were hanging upon the trees **until the evening**. And it came to pass **at the time of the going down of the sun**, that Joshua commanded, and they took them down off the trees, and cast them into the cave wherein they had been hid, and laid great stones in the cave's mouth, which remain until this very day.'

*Mark 1:32 ...'And **at even, when the sun did set**, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils.'*

So we not only have testimony from God that a day begins at 'evening.' We even have clear testimony telling us that evening is at the going down of the sun. Now there is also an interesting verse in the book of Daniel regarding 'days,' look:

*Daniel 8:14,26 ...'And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred **days**; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed ... And the vision of the **evening and the morning** which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days.'*

If you look at the Hebrew meaning for the word 'days' in verse 14, you will see it means 'evening and morning,' which many other translations actually state. And this corresponds with verse 26 which calls the vision 'the vision of the evening and the morning.' So we have the testimony of God in Genesis saying that a day consists of evening and morning. We have the testimony of God telling the Jews to begin observing the feast sabbaths at evening, and

we have the testimony of God through the prophet Daniel confirming that 'days' are 'evening and morning.' And yet the people who hold to the 'day begins at dawn' theory say there is no testimony in the Bible confirming that a day starts at evening. Really? Let us also take a look at the New Testament.

*Mark 15:34,37 ...'And at **the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice**, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? ... And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and **gave up the ghost.**'*

*Luke 23:46,50,52-54 ...'And **when Jesus had cried with a loud voice**, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost ... And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just ... This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid. And that day was the preparation, and **the sabbath drew on.**'*

So Jesus cried out and died on the cross at the ninth hour, which was Jewish time for 3pm in the afternoon. And we are told in Luke 23 above that "*the sabbath drew on.*" Now it is interesting to note that the words "*drew on*" in the Greek means "*begin to dawn.*" Now this cannot be a literal dawn as in the first light of the daytime, because that was around 13 hours away. This phrase is only used in one other place in the New Testament, and that is Matthew 28:1, where we are told that the two Mary's came to the tomb "*as it **began to dawn** toward the first day of the week.*" This is a favorite verse used by the people who hold to the 'day begins at dawn' theory, and we will deal with this verse further down the page. But think about it. Was dawn 12 or 13 hours away when the two Mary's came to the tomb? No. Dawn was about to begin. It was at hand.

Matthew 28:1 - it began to dawn ('*epiphosko*') - literally about to begin.

Luke 23:54 - the sabbath drew on ('*epiphosko*') - literally about to begin.

Do you see? The same meaning **must** be applied to Luke 23 where it says that "*the sabbath drew on [**began to dawn**].*" It wasn't 12 or 13 hours away at literal dawn the next day. It was literally about to begin, just as dawn was literally about to begin in Matthew 28:1. The account of John regarding Mary going to the tomb said it was '*still dark.*' So dawn could have at most been a couple hours away. But the point is, it was about to happen, and was certainly not 13 hours away.

We must be consistent with God's Word. If you say the sabbath in Luke 23 wasn't until dawn the next day, which was about 12-13 hours away, then you also have to say that dawn the first day of the week in Matthew 28:1 was yet 12 to 13 hours away. But no one would accept that would they? We all know that dawn was literally about to break on the first day of the week in Matthew 28. Therefore we have to accept that the sabbath day was literally about to break in Luke 23. And no, it was not the 'passover sabbath' in Luke 23, because as Leviticus 23:7 says, the Jews were only commanded not to do any '*servile work*' on this feast sabbath, ie., no working for other people, making money, business, etc. Thus there was no need of a 'preparation day' for the feast sabbath, like there is for the weekly sabbath. So this preparation day must have been the weekly preparation day for the weekly sabbath. And it could not have been preparation day for passover, because that would have been the previous day.

*Luke 4:31,38-40 ... 'And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on **the sabbath days** ... And he arose **out of the synagogue**, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her. And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them. Now **when the sun was setting**, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.'*

So Jesus taught in the synagogue each sabbath and on this particular sabbath He went to Simon's mother in law's house and healed her. Then we are told that when the sun had set on this sabbath day, the Jews then brought all their sick to Him. Why did they wait until the sun did set? Because it was the sabbath day and the Jews believed that healing was a 'work' and that they could not do any work on the sabbath, including healing. We know this was a weekly sabbath, because the Jews were only not permitted to do 'servile work' on the feast sabbaths. Thus this must have been a weekly sabbath where the Jews believed they could do no work at all. But as we know, the 'works of God' are permitted on the weekly sabbath, including healing. But the Jews did not understand this, which is why they waited until sunset. Hence, we can see that sunset was the **ending** of the sabbath, which means the previous sunset must have been the beginning of the sabbath.

*"The Jews reckoned their days from evening to evening, according to the order which is mentioned in the first chapter of Genesis, in the account of the work of creation: The evening and the morning were the first day." Their Sabbath, therefore, or seventh day, began at sunset on the day we call Friday, and lasted till the same time on the day following." (Nevin's Biblical Antiquities, p. 171) (quoted in The Signs of the Times, Aug.19, 1875, p.323)*

*"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 the 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." (Josephus Wars of the Jews, book iv., chap. 9, sec.12) (quoted in The Signs of the Times, Aug.19, 1875, p.323)*

The people who hold to the 'day begins at dawn' theory use a number of verses to support their belief. So we will briefly take a look at those verses to see if there is any merit in them supporting a dawn-day belief. Matthew 28:1 is one of those verses:

*Matthew 28:1 ... '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.'*

A literal reading of this verse on its own, without any other verses will certainly support the theory that a day begins at dawn, rather than at sunset/evening. But let us take a look at the verses from the other gospels describing the very same event, and we will get the true picture.

*John 20:1 ... 'The **first day of the week** cometh Mary Magdalene **early, WHEN IT WAS YET DARK**, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.'*

*Luke 24:1-2 ... 'Now **upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning**, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.'*

*Mark 16:1-2 ... '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.'*

So we know from all these verses that it is already the first day of the week, not 'heading towards' the first day as Matthew 28:1 suggests. As we can see from John, it was still dark when Mary went to the tomb. So this would support what Matthew 28:1 says, not that it is heading towards the first day of the week, but that it is **heading towards dawn** OF the first day of the week. This is what '*dawning towards the first day of the week*' can also mean. Luke says it is very early in the morning and also Mark. Now Mark says '*at the rising of the sun.*' Does this mean the sun has risen? No, because John says it is still dark. So Mark must mean that the sun is in its 'rising' phase, heading 'towards dawn' as Matthew suggests. But they all clearly confirm it is already the first day of the week and it has not YET dawned. So Matthew 28:1 cannot be used on its own to support the 'dawn-day' theory.

*Mark 15:42-43 ... 'And now **when the even was come**, because it was the preparation, that is, **the day before the sabbath**, Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.'*

The above verses in Mark are also used by 'dawn-day' believers, suggesting that Joseph went to Pilate for the body of Jesus when it was already sunset and the Sabbath would have begun, according to the day begins at sunset belief. Thus they say that this supports the 'dawn-day' theory, saying that Joseph knew it was not the sabbath until dawn, which is why he went to claim the body of Jesus when it was already 'evening/sunset,' and yet still the 'preparation day.' But if we take a look at some other verses, we will see there were TWO 'evenings' reckoned by the Jews:

*Matthew 14:15-23 ... 'And **when it was evening**, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat ... And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and **when the evening was come**, he was there alone.*

An examination of Exodus 12:6 will see that Israel were to kill the passover lamb '*in between*' the evening, or as some render it '*in between the TWO evenings.*' And what do we have above in Matthew 14? This is the feeding of the five thousand, and we are told that when the disciples came to Jesus to tell him to send the multitude away so they could eat, that it was **already evening**. Mark 6:35 says '*when the day was now far spent.*' Luke 9:12 says '*And when the day began to wear away.*' As we know, after this, Jesus fed them with the loaves and fish. Jesus commanded the multitude to sit down, then he took the loaves and fishes, blessed and break them; and after eating, the disciples gathered up the fragments that remained. All this work required considerable time, and yet we are to remember that it was **evening before all this was done**. Then we are told that when Jesus had gone alone up into the mountain, **evening was come**.

*"On this point the Bible Dictionary says, 'The Hebrews reckoned two evenings in each day according to the Pharisees and the Rabbins, the first evening began when the sun inclined to*

*descend more rapidly; that is, at the ninth hour; while the second, or real evening, commenced at sunset.*" (The Present Truth, June 21, 1888, Supplement, p.3)

*"The first evening, says Greenfield, commenced about the ninth hour of the day, and reached to sunset; the second from sunset till dark."* (Review and Herald, January 17, 1856, p.128)

*"Robinson in his Greek Lexicon of the New Testament, under the word, evening, says:- 'The Hebrews reckoned two evenings; so in the phrase ['between the two evenings'], as marking the interval or portion of the day during which the paschal lamb was to be killed, Ex.12:6; Lev.23:5; Num.9:3,5; and also the evening sacrifice was to be offered, Ex.29:39,41; Num.28:4. The time thus marked was regarded by the Karaites and Samaritans as being the interval between sunset and dark. But the Pharisees and Rabbinites, according to the Mishnah (Pesach 5.3), held the first evening to commence with the declining sun; and the second evening with the setting sun. This latter view was the prevailing one in the time of our Lord."* (Review and Herald, Feb.28, 1878, p.68)

So we can clearly see that when Joseph went to Pilate for the body of Jesus, it would have been the 'first evening,' very soon after Jesus was crucified around 3pm, a number of hours before sunset. And this matches the testimony of John 19:41-42 which says that Joseph chose the sepulchre which was in the very garden where Jesus was crucified "**because of the Jews' preparation**" for the sabbath. If it wasn't sabbath for another 12 or 13 hours [at dawn], why did they need to bury Jesus so close to where He was crucified? It is because the sabbath was soon to begin at sunset (the second 'evening.'). This matches with what we have already shown further above in Luke 23, how the sabbath '*drew on,*' or literally was '*about to dawn*' after the crucifixion.

Those who hold to the 'dawn-day' theory also quote the many verses that lists 'day' before 'night' like Genesis 8:22, Joshua 1:8, Psalm 1:2, Revelation 7:15, etc. And they say '*see! God says day is before night, not the other way around.*' And yet there are also many verses which list night before day, such as 1 Samuel 25:16, 1 Kings 8:29, Isaiah 27:3, Jeremiah 14:17, Mark 4:27, Luke 2:37, Acts 20:31, etc. So this argument cannot be used in support of the 'dawn-day' theory.

This all boils down to taking God at His word. "*the evening and the morning were the first day, second day, third day ...*" Also, "*From even unto even shall ye celebrate your Sabbath.*" Why do people spend so much time in trying to make God's word not say what it is saying? It was the devil who originally said ... "*did God REALLY say that?*" And this distrust in God's plain word continues today. Yes, there is scripture that is symbolical and cannot be taken as it literally reads, like prophecy. But unless it does damage to common sense and logic, then we are to take God's word as it reads. God says the day begins at evening, at sunset. So as for me and my house, we will take God's word as it reads and trust in His word.