

The Seventh-Day Sabbath

By

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EARTHEN VESSELS

2 CORINTHIANS 4:7



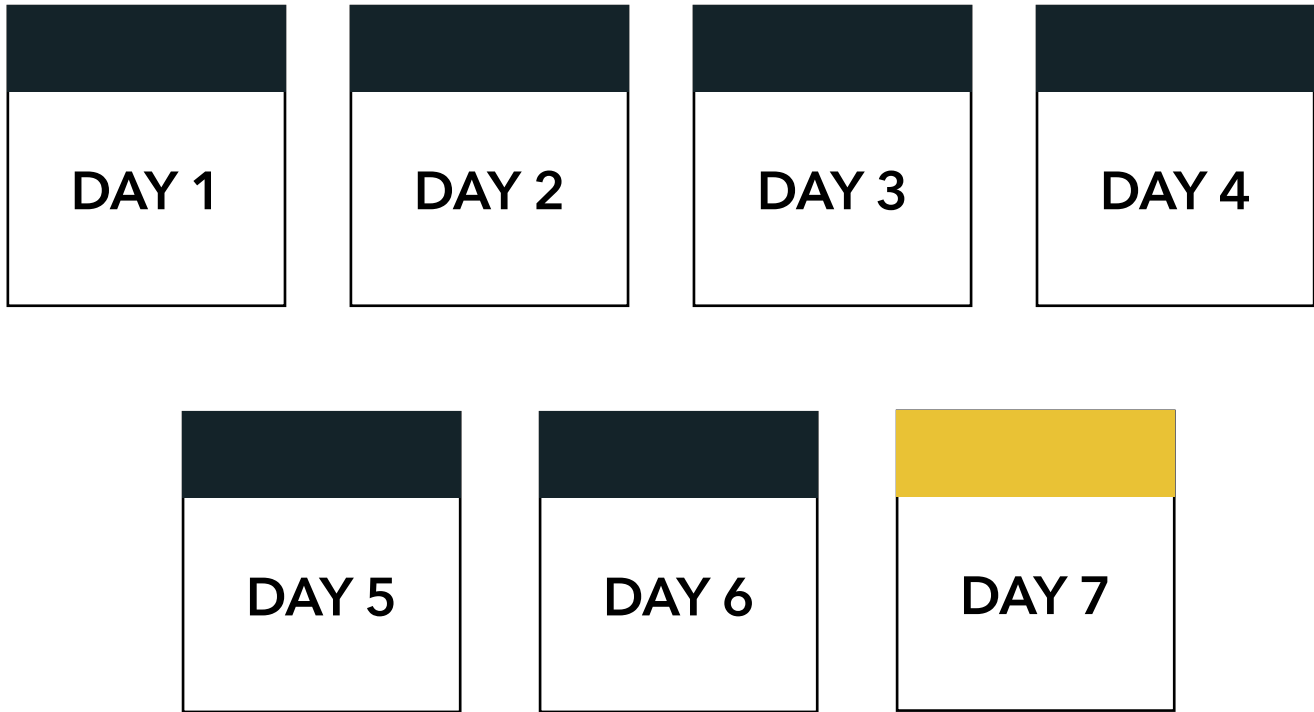
On the topic of the seventh-day Sabbath, my wife and I (along with millions of other sincere souls) have seen for many years now, just how binding the observance the seventh day of the week is to the Christian experience. We can start here in the Bible by seeing that, from the very onset of creation, the weekly cycle was instituted with the seventh day being the end of that cycle. Even from that first week of creation the seventh day was given special status by God Himself.

Genesis 2:1-4 (KJV) ¹Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ²And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and *he rested on the seventh day* from all his work which he had made. ³And *God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it:* because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made. ⁴These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

As you may see above, there is something significant which God has ascribed to the seventh day of the week, from the very first week that our world existed.

*“And God
blessed the
seventh
day, and
sanctified
it...”*

*The Bible says, “God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.” (Gen.2:3).
Notice that God did not do this for the other days of the week.*



How would we be able to reckon these special times, like the seventh day, with certainty?

What we can notice furthermore friend, is that previous to the verses above, what you will find within the very first chapter of Genesis, is the literal six days of creation in plain order. The first six days of the creation – finished off by the seventh-day Sabbath – that entire account gives us the basis as to how we are to know what a day, week, month and year means, right down to our very generation and forever. The very first day sets us on the correct path when we take it as it reads from the Genesis 1 account:

Genesis 1:2-5 (KJV) ²And 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. ³And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. ⁴And God saw the light, that it was good: and God *divided* the light from the darkness. ⁵And God called the light *Day*, and the darkness he called *Night*. *And the evening and the morning were the first day.*

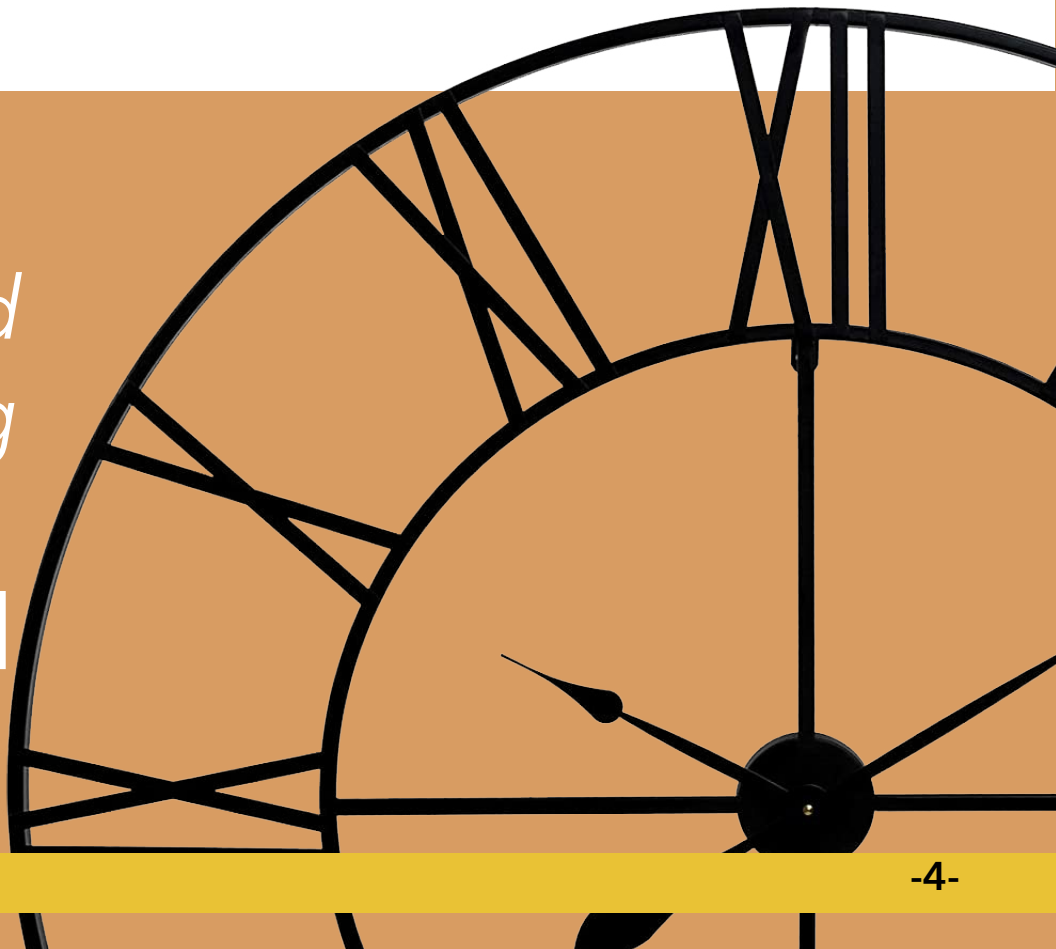
We can see that from the very first divine actions which took place to design our world, divine wisdom sought to commemorate those actions by grouping them into time periods. Hence the first set of creative actions are recorded over a time period called the “first day” (Gen.1:5). The creation goes on like this in sequential manner to the *second day*, *third day*, etc., before ending on the *seventh day*. Particularly, the passage above also shows us the specific makeup of these days. Each day consisted of two parts: *light* representing *day*, and *darkness* representing *night*.

There is one other important thing to note here however: the actual *order* of the day. Question: According to Genesis 1, which portion of the day is accounted first, the *light* portion which is called *day*, or the *dark* portion which is called *night*? If we are honest, we may first remember that before God had designated any *light* whatsoever, there was already *darkness*: “darkness was upon the face of the deep.” (Gen.1:2). It is that same *darkness* which was divided from the *light* in Genesis 1:4; it is that same *darkness* which is called *night* in Genesis 1:5. Therefore, by its very origin preceding that of *light*, we must conclude with the Scripture narrative that the *dark portion*, the *night*

is counted as occurring first. The *night* is actually what indicates the beginning of the 24-hour periods we simply call “days.” That is why at the end of every major 24-hour milestone of the creation week, it says: “And the *evening* and the *morning* were the [sequential] day.” (Gen.1:5,8,13,19,23,31). According to Scripture, the *evening*, the onset of *night-time*, chronologically precedes the *morning*, the onset of *day-time*. It is when we total the *night-time* hours alongside the *day-time* hours which follow – such is how we are to reckon the full 24-hour, biblical “day.”

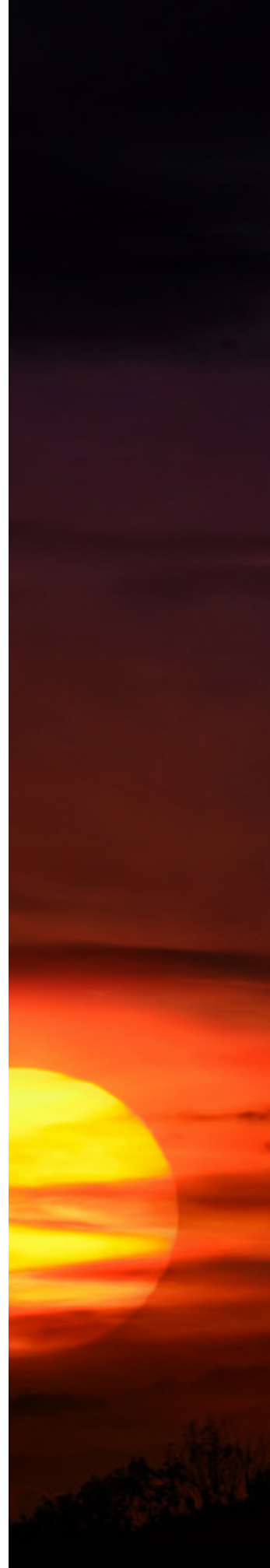
This system becomes much clearer in the creation account, when on the fourth day, the sun and the moon are made. Through the consistent behaviour of these two heavenly lights, God’s children have been able to rely on and confirm the various delineations of time. The weekly system we organize our entire lives around has to do with how God has ever been faithful to maintain the ordinances of the sun and moon:

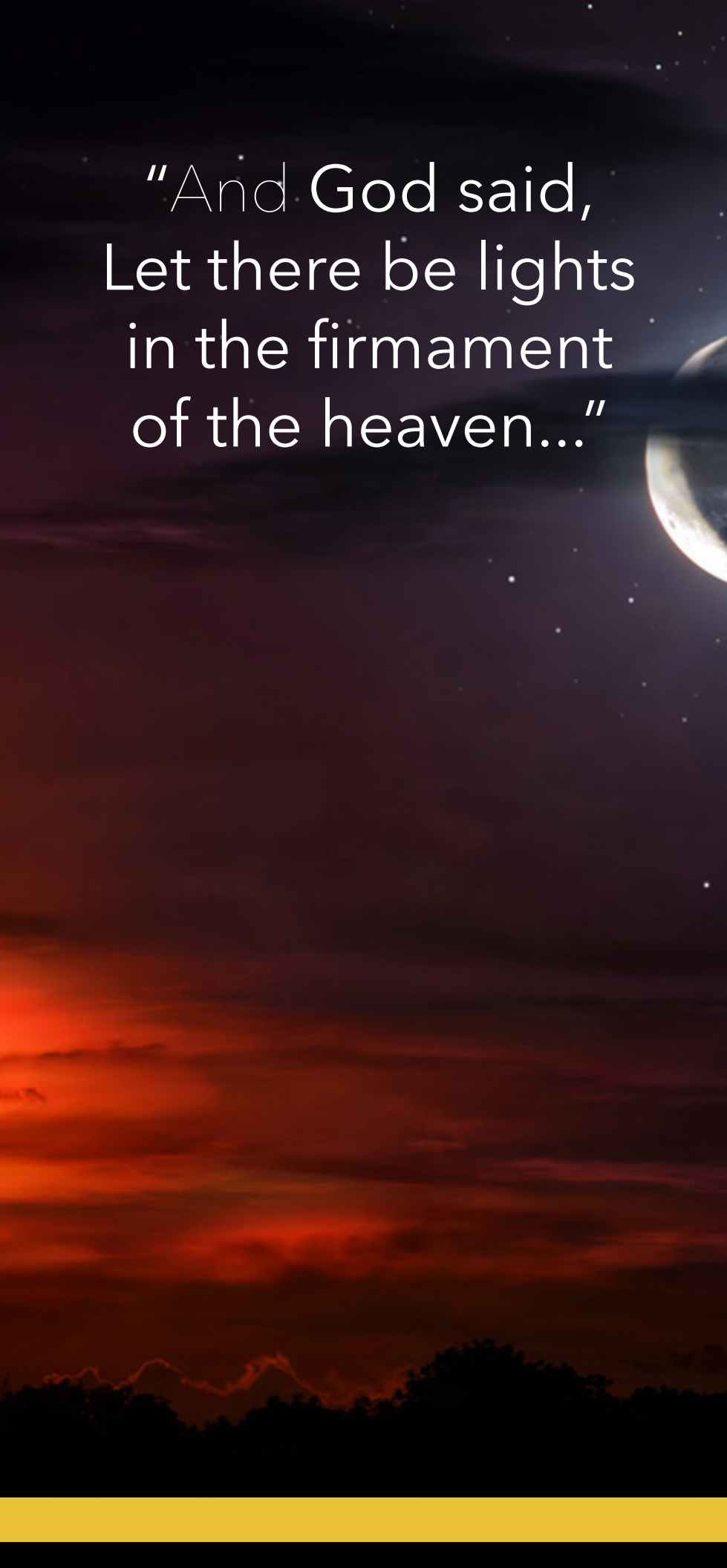
“And the evening and the morning were the [sequential] day.”



Genesis 1:14-18 (KJV) ¹⁴And 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, and for seasons, and for days, and years:* ¹⁵And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. ¹⁶And God made *two great lights*; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. ¹⁷And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸And *to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness:* and God saw that it was good.

Therefore we can see that God has been faithful because since their creation, the sun and moon have ever been consistent. Wherever we may live, at some reliable time the sun always sets and the moon appears, to initiate that 12-hour portion of time which is called *night*. Twelve hours passing, the moon gradually disappears from view whilst the sun rises to take its place as the light-bearer. The sun remains as such for 12 hours, before setting again to complete the cycle. The 12-hour period of the sun's light-bearing is what we call *day-time* or *daylight*, which explains the wisdom of Christ's words here: "Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day^[day-time]? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world." (John 11:9).





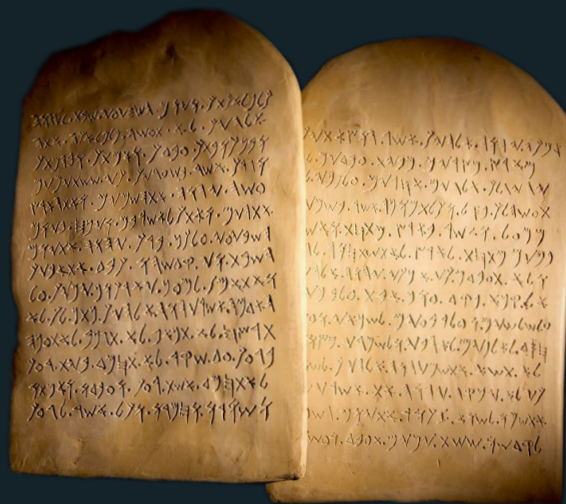
“And God said,
Let there be lights
in the firmament
of the heaven...”

When we combine the two 12-hour periods – the first where the moon dominates the sky (night-time), and the second when the sun dominates the sky (day-time) – that is how we are able to reckon a full 24-hour day, according to the Bible.

Seventh-day Sabbath observance

It is on the time principle given at the creation account, that we choose to observe the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath. How do we know the seventh day of the week is called the Sabbath, and that we are called to observe it as holy day? Well, within the Ten Commandments, which were written by “the finger of God (Exo.31:18),” we are given instruction of undisputable divine origin. The fourth commandment – the longest worded among all ten – gives us God’s own instructions regarding the seventh-day Sabbath:

Exodus 20:8-11 (KJV) ⁸Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: ¹⁰But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: ¹¹For 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.



We observe the Sabbath because God said we should remember it, to keep it holy. We observe the seventh day of the week as that day because the Word says, “the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.” (Exo.20:10). We observe this day because as Christians, we ought to keep God’s commandments (1 John 2:3-4); and this particular commandment is a sign that the God of the Bible is our Creator, Lord and Sanctifier:

Ezekiel 20:12,20 (KJV) ¹²Moreover also I gave them my *sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them.* . . . ²⁰And *hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God.*

Despite the fact that professing Christians would like to do away with God’s commandments, particularly the Sabbath, the Bible does not agree with their sentiments. The Sabbath and all other commandments of God are part of the conditions necessary for us to enter into the kingdom of God. Jesus Christ our Saviour plainly said, “If thou wilt enter into life, *keep the commandments.*” (Matt.19:17). Kindly note that there are ample supporting verses on this essential point, even some more from Jesus’ own mouth:

Matthew 5:17,19 (KJV) ¹⁷Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. . .
¹⁹Whosoever therefore shall *break* one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

John 14:15 (KJV) ¹⁵If ye love me, keep my commandments.


John 15:10 (KJV) ¹⁰If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

1 John 2:3-4 (KJV) ³And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

1 John 5:2-3 (KJV) ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. ³For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

Revelation 22:14 (KJV) ¹⁴Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

Revelation 14:12 (KJV) ¹²Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.



“If ye love me, keep
my commandments.”

We observe the Sabbath because in accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour, we also accept that keeping God’s commandments is included in that covenant. The love of Christ and the keeping of God’s commandments go hand in hand, as that is the example which Christ Himself and the Scriptures teach, both Old and New Testament.

How then do we know which day of the week is the seventh-day Sabbath?

The Sabbath marks the end of the biblical week, because the creation-week account stops at the seventh day and goes no further. There is no eighth day nor beyond; the creation week simply stops at the seventh day, and afterward cycles back into the first day of the next week. The seventh-day Sabbath marks the end of the week, and the next day is the first day of the new week. The account of Jesus' burial and resurrection proves this point clearly:

Matthew 28:1 (KJV) *¹In 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.





As we would carefully see, Matthew's gospel reveals that the *end of the Sabbath*, the end of the *seventh day*, marks the beginning of the *first day* of the new weekly cycle. God instituted a seven-day cycle and nothing else!

Yet, an enquirer may ask at this point: Has one particular seven-day cycle always been maintained from creation till now? Would the seventh day of our 21st century week match up to the seventh day of the Bible? Let us see if God's Word could give us certain answers. Notice these verses:

Genesis 8:20-22 (KJV) ²⁰And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake. . . neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. ²²While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and *day and night shall not cease.*

"...and
on the
seventh
day he
rested,
and was
refreshed."

Jeremiah 33:19-21 (KJV) ¹⁹And the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, saying, ²⁰Thus 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;* ²¹Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers.

Exodus 31:15-17 (KJV) ¹⁵Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. . . ¹⁶Wherefore *the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.* ¹⁷It is a sign between me and the children of Israel *for ever*: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.

Through the aid of the Holy Spirit, a sincere, intelligent reading of the verses above only can give us one harmonious set of conclusions. The first thing we can confirm from the Scripture is that God is the One who regulates the ordinances of nature, to the point of acknowledging these ordinances as a *covenant*. As God said to Noah, under His divine care, *day and night shall not cease*.

Through the testimony of Jeremiah, we see God challenging finite man, pitifully asking if man could *break God's covenant of the day and night in their season*. It is clear that God has invested His divine authority on the fact that day and night, regulated under a seven-day weekly cycle, *shall not cease*. We can trust that the divine God has maintained this covenant, and that man has never been able, nor will ever be able to break it, nor even successfully obscure it. The children of God, who follow His Word, will ever be able to trace the weekly cycle, including the seventh-day Sabbath which they are called to set apart as holy.

This brings us to the last passage of Scripture above. If we would like to know for certain which day is the seventh-day Sabbath, even up to our modern times, we need look no further than the *children of Israel*. The Scripture says the children of Israel shall *observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant*. The Scripture further states the seventh-day Sabbath is *a sign between God and the children of Israel for ever*. The seventh-day Sabbath has never been lost, and will never be lost to the children of Israel, even to our generation. Whether you would like to look upon the *ethnic* children of Israel affirming literal descendance, or the *spiritual* children of Israel, which apostle Paul affirms in Romans 2:28-29, all such yet acknowledge the exact period of time as the seventh-day Sabbath.

For all those who have affirmed the seventh-day Sabbath in history, and all those affirming the seventh-day Sabbath today, you will find that all are still acknowledging the very same day according to the weekly cycle. For all those the world over who agree that the Sabbath is the seventh day of the week, you will find absolutely no discrepancy

upon which day they observe. Above all that, just according to God's own Word alone, you can know for sure that the seventh-day Sabbath (acknowledged by those who affirm the Scriptures), is the correct reckoning according to God's calendar. God said the seventh-day Sabbath would be a sign maintained by the children of Israel *for ever, throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant*. God has assured of this by His own omniscient, prophetic utterance, so we cannot be in doubt on this point. Whatsoever day the children of Israel are keeping as the seventh day today, surely remains the Sabbath of the Lord.

How should Bible-believing Christians acknowledge the seventh-day Sabbath?

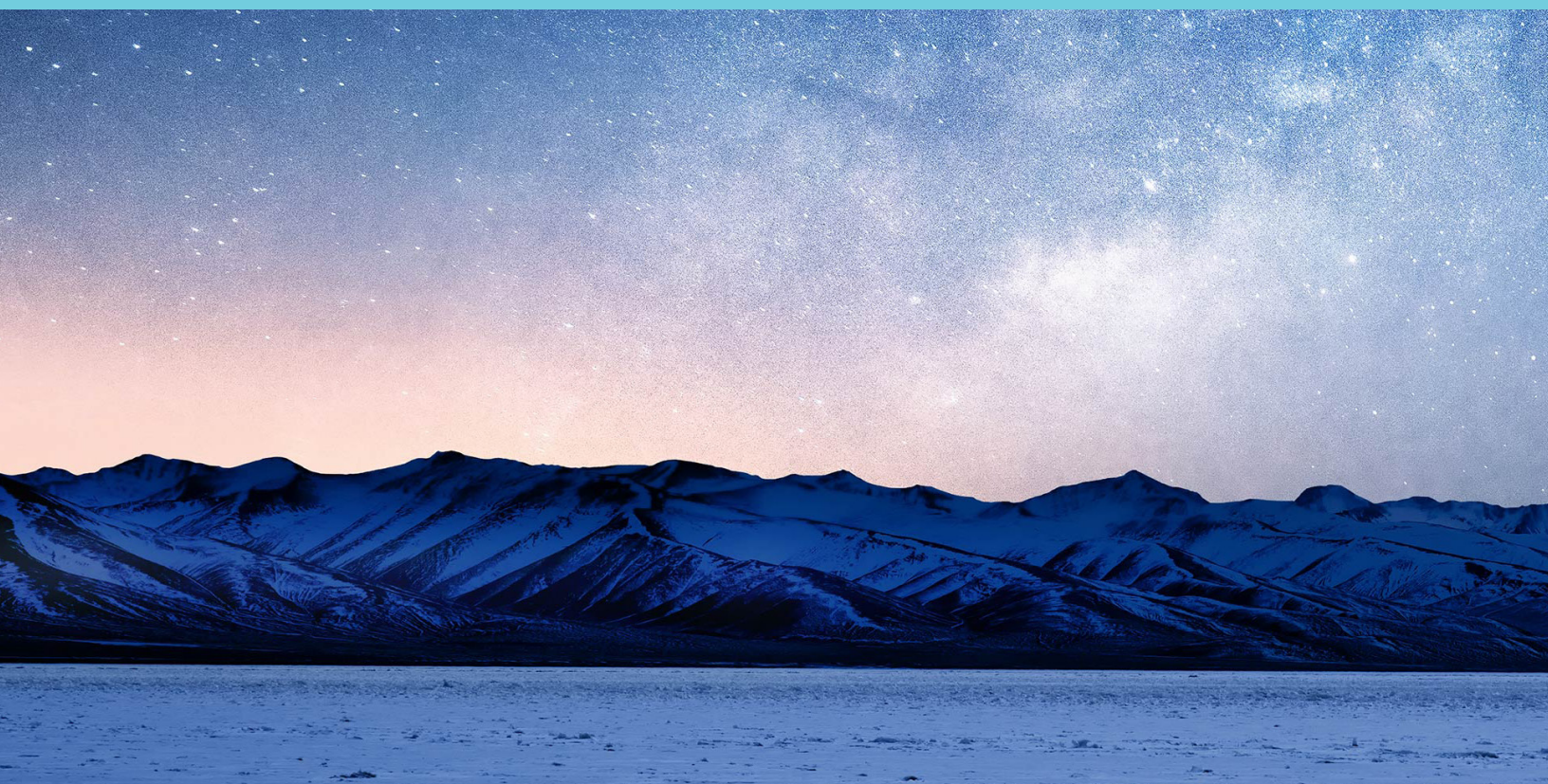
Culminating all that we have been learning in this study, we can acknowledge the Sabbath aright by first recognizing, that it begins at the setting of the sun of the seventh day of the weekly cycle. Remembering that the 24-hour day biblically begins at *evening*, the onset of *night-time*, we ought to recognize that this is exactly where the Sabbath begins on the seventh day of the week. While the nations which were influenced by the pagan Anglo-Saxon language now call the seventh day *Saturday*, there are still many language cultures which have maintained the historical title of this day as *the Sabbath* by translation.

A white rectangular sign with a black border and a black shadow, tilted slightly to the right. The word "SATURDAY" is written on the sign in a bold, black, serif font, all in capital letters. The sign is positioned in the bottom right corner of the page, overlapping the yellow footer.

SATURDAY

Spanish	Italian	Somalian	Greek	Russian
Sábado	Sabato	Sabti	Sávvato	Subbota
German	Ethiopian	Arabic	Sudanese	Hebrew
Samstag	Sanbat	Sabet	Saptu	Shabbat

There are many others, yet the point is clear that many cultures still retain the truth that the popular *Saturday* of today is historically the *Sabbath*.



To observe the seventh-day Sabbath according to the Bible then means that we should accurately detect the *evening*, the *beginning* of the seventh day of the week. In light of the popular Anglo-Saxon tradition, the simplest explanation would be that what most call *Friday evening* today would actually be the *beginning of the seventh-day Sabbath*. As the sun sets on *Friday evening*, and 24-hours later unto the setting of the sun *Saturday evening* – this is the true period of seventh-day Sabbath observance. Once you recognize this period, then you can properly observe it by reviewing the instructions of the fourth commandment, alongside other verses such as these:

Exodus 16:23 (NET) ²³He said to them, “This is what the LORD has said: ‘Tomorrow is a time of cessation from work, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Whatever you want to bake, *bake today*; whatever you want to boil, *boil today*; whatever is left put aside for yourselves to be kept until morning.’”

Isaiah 58:13-14 (KJV) ¹³If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, *not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words*: ¹⁴Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.



Luke 4:16 (KJV) ¹⁶And [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

Acts 13:42-44 (KJV) ⁴²And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. ⁴³Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. ⁴⁴And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

As noted in the following short summary; keeping the seventh-day Sabbath according to the Bible means that during this 24-hour period:

We should not wilfully engage in any secular, non-essential, non-spiritual pursuits. This applies to all within the influence of our household.

We should prepare our houses and food in order, before the seventh-day Sabbath begins, that we have no reason to tend to such during the 24-hour period.

We should keep the Sabbath day holy by not having thoughts and conversations about our own desires; all our attentions should be strictly centred on the things of God.

We should find opportunity where possible to fellowship with others of like faith, and share in the preaching of the Word of God. This begins from the family circle, but of course extends to a wider congregation of believers, wherever possible.

We should commemorate the opening, duration and closure of every Sabbath day, with a true acknowledgement of God as our Creator, and Jesus Christ as our Redeemer.



Conclusion

It is my prayer that this study into the seventh-day Sabbath may be a blessing to you. I continue to pray that the significance of this blessed day and its peace shall bring you into a closer relationship with God. The hope of all sincere Bible-believers who recognize the true seventh-day Sabbath, should certainly be reflected in this final verse I leave you with. It reveals to us that even after salvation in the earth made new, every true believer shall gather to worship our Creator and Redeemer *from one Sabbath to another*:

Isaiah 66:22-23 (KJV) ²²For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. ²³And it shall come to pass, that **from one new moon to another, and *from one sabbath to another*, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD.**

May the love of God and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Amen.



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