

# Is the Sabbath day 12 or 24 hours?

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## INTRODUCTION – THE WORD ‘DAY’

Before we can find out the length of the Biblical day and of the weekly Sabbath day, we first need to be quite clear on the usage of the word ‘day’ in the Bible. The word has a wide range of meanings such as

1. The period of daylight – that is twelve hours
2. A combined interval of daylight and night consisting of twenty-four hours
3. A special time or event e.g. “*the day of trouble*” or “*the day of Yahweh*” and
4. An allotted time such as “*while it is day*” meaning “while there is still time”; “*all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years*”, meaning the length of Adam’s life was nine hundred and thirty years”.

These examples of the Biblical usages of ‘day’ are sufficient to indicate that we cannot choose any one meaning and assume that it applies in all cases whenever the word occurs in the Bible. The Hebrew word ‘yom’ and Greek word ‘hemera’ for ‘day’ have a range of meanings, which are understood or defined in their different Biblical contexts.

For the purpose of this article we will be considering only the instances in the Bible when the word refers directly or indirectly to either a period of daylight (approximately twelve hours) or a period of daylight and night consisting of twenty-four hours. We will provide evidences of both usages of the word ‘day’ in the Bible, which will enable **you to decide** what is the **correct duration of the Biblical Sabbath day**.

# THE CASE FOR A TWELVE-HOUR DAY

Some Sabbath keepers insist that the Biblical day has twelve hours and that the Sabbath day is **only the period of daylight**. We shall consider their main reasons for this.

Most begin with the Creation account given in **Genesis 1:3-5**

3 *Then [Elohim] said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.*

4 *And [Elohim] saw the light, that it was good; and [Elohim] divided the light from the darkness.*

5 *[Elohim] called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.*

In these verses we see that Yahweh's first act on the first day of creation was to create light (verse 3); then He separated the light from the darkness (verse 4); and called the light "day" and the darkness "night" (verse 5). The 'day' in verse 5a was the period of light and was separated from darkness, which is night. We shall explore this more fully and we shall see that this definition of day aptly draws a distinction between the interval of light and of darkness, but cannot be applied to all occurrences of the word in the Bible. We will come to that later, but for now let us continue to look at the times in the Bible when it would appear that a day has only twelve hours.

Ps 104:23 says, *Man goes out to his work and to his labor until the evening.*

This is substantiated in the following verses:

Gen 30:16 *When Jacob came out of the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, "You must come in to me, for I have surely hired you with my son's mandrakes." And he lay with her that night.*

Judg 19:16 *Just then an old man came in from his work in the field at evening, who also was from the mountains of Ephraim.*

Ruth 2:17 *So she gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.*

Matt 20:1 *the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.*

2 *Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.*

3 *And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,*

4 *and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went.*

5 *Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise.*

6 *And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?'*

7 *They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.'*

8 *So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.'*

9 *And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius.*

10 *But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius.*

11 *And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner,*

12 *saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.'*

13 *But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?'*

14 *Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you.*

15 *Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?'*

16 *So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.*

The foregoing verses indicate that during Bible times, in a mainly agrarian society, the working day was generally the daylight hours from morning to evening, when persons could see to carry out their work. But this does not in itself provide the answer we seek with regard to the length of the Sabbath day. One important reason is that even in Bible times, persons worked at night, for there is no prohibition in the Bible against doing so.

We will return to the subject of night-working later, but for now we will continue to look at some other quotations that are often cited in support of a twelve-hour day:

Mark 1:21 *Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught.*

32 *At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed.*

33 *And the whole city was gathered together at the door.*

These verses are often quoted to prove that a day ends at evening. The explanation is frequently given that it was because Sabbath had ended why the sick and demon-possessed persons were brought to Yahshua in large numbers. The Bible does not tell us it was the end of the Sabbath day, but persons who believe the day is twelve hours latch on to this supposition in order to justify their stance. Conjectures are not facts. Let us stick with what the Bible actually says. Earlier that Sabbath day a man with an unclean spirit was healed **in the synagogue** (verses 23-27), and **there was no opposition to that healing being on the Sabbath day!** Therefore the fact that no objection was raised to the healing carried out after sunset, does not prove that the Sabbath had ended.

John 9:4 *"I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.*

We have already at the outset referred to the expression *"while it is day"*. Yahshua was not talking of a literal day and night. He was saying in effect, "I must do what I have to do while I have the time and opportunity to do so". His hearers who knew that most work was carried out in the daytime would have easily understood His meaning. It was another form of our expression, "make hay while the sun shines", which means "make the most of your opportunities while you are able to do so".

John 11:9 *[Yahshua] answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world.*

This verse is very often quoted to prove that a Biblical day consisted of twelve hours. But when we consider this in its context and also as rendered by other translations, a different meaning emerges. Here are some other translations of this verse:

*[Yahshua] answered, "Aren't there twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day don't stumble, because they see the light of this world (GWT).*

*[Yahshua] answered, "Aren't there twelve hours of daylight? If a man walks in the day, he doesn't stumble, because he sees the light of this world (HNV).*

*[Yahshua] answered, "Aren't there 12 hours of daylight? A person who walks during the day won't trip and fall. He can see because of this world's light (NIRV).*

*[Yahshua] answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light (NIV).*

*[Yahshua] replied, "There are twelve hours of daylight every day. As long as it is light, people can walk safely. They can see because they have the light of this world (NLT).*

*[Yahshua] answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world (NRS).*

*[Yahshua] replied, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in daylight doesn't stumble because there's plenty of light from the sun (MSG).*

*[Yahshua] answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light (TNIV).*

*[Yahshua] answered, "Aren't there twelve hours of daylight? If a man walks in the day, he doesn't stumble, because he sees the light of this world (WEB).*

It is apparent from these translations as well as from the context that Yahshua was talking about being able to walk safely in the daytime in which one can see the light of the day, as opposed to those who walk in darkness and stumble because they have no light and cannot see. Yahshua made this statement because His disciples were fearful of Him going to Judea, where there had previously been a threat to His life (verses 7 and 8). Yahshua might have been inferring that He would not be made to fall at the hands of His enemies at this time, for He would not be travelling like someone who was in the dark concerning what was ahead. He had the foreknowledge of when His time to die would come. Because of this insight (light) He was not afraid of the Jewish threat to stone Him (John 11:8) for He knew that His hour of death had not yet come. He went up boldly, knowing what He was doing.

His remark could also suggest, that it was still 'daytime' for Him (as He had said in John 9:4), for His hour of death had not yet come. Therefore once again He would not stumble. In either case Yahshua was clearly making a contrast between walking safely in the daylight when one can see, and stumbling at night when there is no light. His comment that there are twelve hours in the day was not a definition of a day, for as we shall soon see (Mark 14:30), He Himself spoke of a day, which **included** the night. He was merely making a statement that there is a period of daylight (twelve hours) in which one can walk safely without stumbling. This is a fact whether one believes the Biblical day is twelve or twenty-four hours.

Many other verses in the Bible suggest that it was customary to terminate work, end journeys or cease activity at evening. *But they constrained Him, saying, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent"* Luke 24:29. As the light of day was fading these Emmaus men offered hospitality to their Stranger, for as Yahshua has intimated, those who walk in darkness are likely to stumble (John 11:9). The same idea is given in other verses, that when the daylight was fading/had faded, it was not the right time to begin or continue a journey. *And when the man stood to depart--he and his concubine and his servant--his father-in-law, the young woman's father, said to him, "Look, the day is now drawing toward evening; please spend the night. See, the day is coming to an end; lodge here, that your heart may be merry. Tomorrow go your way early, so that you may get home"* Judg 19:9.

From the evidence of many verses we have quoted, the ending of daylight was the end of any activity that required the light of day. Persons who do not accept a twenty-four hour day use verses such as these as proof that the day ends at evening, whereas those who maintain that a day is twenty-four hours, would assert that evening is merely the interval of waning daylight that leads into night and the cessation of any action that requires daylight.

The fact that certain pursuits cease with the passing of daylight is no proof that the Biblical day including Sabbath day is only twelve hours. 'Day' as used in the examples given above is synonymous to daylight. Where the word 'day' is used to mean the interval of daylight, then there can be no doubt that day ends when daylight has finally faded. But since 'day' is also used in the Bible to cover a period of twenty-four hours, we cannot opt for the exclusive meaning of daylight in every instance without considering other contexts where that limited meaning is not applicable.

### **Night work in Scripture**

Since the Sabbath is the time for abstaining from work, then the times when work was done in the Bible could be a good clue of the length of the Biblical day. We have seen many verses that confirm work was usually done in the light of day. We indicated that those verses do not give the complete answer, since the Bible also shows instances where night work was carried out. The following verses attest to this:

Neh 4:21 *So we labored in the work, and half of the men held the spears from daybreak until the stars appeared.*

22 *At the same time I also said to the people, "Let each man and his servant stay at night in Jerusalem, that they may be our guard by night and a working party by day."*

23 *So neither I, my brethren, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me took off our clothes, except that everyone took them off for washing.*

Luke 2:8 *Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.*

Luke 5:5 *But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net."*

John 21:3 *Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We are going with you also." They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing.*

1 Thess 2:9 *For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of [Yahshua].*

2 Thess 3:8 *nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you.*

In the Sabbath commandment, Yahweh said, *"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six DAYS you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of [Yahweh] your [Elohim]. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates* Exod 20:8-10.

If one rigidly believes that the word 'day' as used in these verses relates only to the period of daylight, then the Sabbath command would not apply to regular night workers, who do not work for six days at all but only at nights. It would be inconsistent to say that 'day' is strictly only the period of daylight, yet to contend that night-workers come within the Sabbath law. On the other hand it would be equally wrong to think that night-workers were exempt from keeping Yahweh's Sabbath day, since Yahweh has made no such exception. That would obviously be contrary to the spirit of the weekly Sabbath law. Keeping the Sabbath day is obligatory upon all. Does it not therefore follow that the Sabbath day must of necessity cover all periods of a day or night when people work, in other words twenty-four hours?

The incidence of night-working in Bible times would have been far less than it is today. With the advent of electricity and industrialisation, much more work is carried out now at night than in Bible times. But the fact is that although on a much smaller scale than is the case today, work was done at night as well as by day during the Bible era, and Yahweh would not have overlooked this.

The argument is often put forward by supporters of a twelve-hour day that it is because the Biblical day consisted of twelve hours, why in many references to a twenty-four-hour period, the Bible is careful to specify "night(s) and day(s)" or "day(s) and night(s)". But this theory cannot always be substantiated, since in the following examples, a twenty-four-hour period is clearly indicated although the Bible does not state "day(s) and night(s)" or vice versa.

# THE CASE FOR A TWENTY-FOUR HOUR DAY

Many usages of the word ‘day’ (singular or plural) in the Bible make it clear that the word in those instances is referring to an interval of night as well as daylight – that is twenty-four hours.

- John 11:39 tells us that when Yahshua, at the tomb of Lazarus, commanded that the stone be rolled away, Martha answered, “[*Master*], *by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days.*” Lazarus had not been dead for four periods of daylight, and alive at night! He remained dead for a continuous period of four daylights, and nights. Nevertheless, the Bible merely says “*four days*”. It could have said four days and four nights as is sometimes stated elsewhere in the Bible. But it did not. It said “*four days*”, although the meaning was four continuous days of daylight and night. There can be no disagreement that in this case each day of Lazarus’ death consisted of 24 hours. The rigid belief that ‘day’ only means daylight is not applicable in this instance.
- Mark 14:30 Yahshua said to Peter, “*Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.*” Luke gives the same account: Luke 22:34 *Then He said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow **this day** before you will deny three times that you know Me.”* The records indicate that it was night when Peter denied Yahshua. So Yahshua’s words were fulfilled that on the night of that same day, Peter would have denied him three times. That night in which Peter denied Yahshua was part of the day to which Yahshua had referred. The day did not end at sunset, but continued into the night.
- Luke 2:8-11 *Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock **by night**. And behold, an angel of [Yahweh] stood before them, and the glory of [Yahweh] shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you **this day** in the city of David a Savior, who is [the Messiah] the [Sovereign].* Observe that it was night when the angel appeared to the shepherds. Nonetheless, the angel said that the Saviour was born “*this day*”. If the day had ended at evening, the angel would not have said “*this day*”, as the day was already passed. Indeed both this verse and Yahshua’s statement to Peter in Mark 14:30 indicate that night is part of an interval called ‘day’.
- Exod 12:19 *For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses.* Exod 13:7 *Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters.* No leavened bread was to be found on the premises for seven days. Therefore leavened bread could not be eaten during the daytime or at night. This instruction was for seven consecutive days and nights, each ‘day’ lasting for twenty-four hours. If in this case the days were only the daylight period, then the command would have been self-contradictory and pointless. Yahweh does not make mistakes. His seven days were not seven periods of daylight but of daylight and night.
- 2 Chron 36:9 *Jehoiachin was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months and ten days.* Jehoiachin reigned for a continuous period that spanned three months and ten days. He did not reign only in the daytime. The ten days, like all the other days of his reign consisted of daylight and night – periods of twenty-four hours. Thus the word ‘days’ is here used to mean daylight and night.
- Acts 20:6 *But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.* After five days, which included five periods of daylight and of night, Paul went to Troas and in his words, stayed there “*seven days*”. There is no indication that he only stayed there during the daylight periods of each of those seven days and returned to Philippi each night. The seven days could only have been seven days each of twenty-four hours. If a day is only the period of daylight, then in all occurrences of this word, where it is meant to cover a twenty-four-hour period, we should be told day and night. But this distinction has not been always made. Therefore ‘days’ in this context has the meaning of daylights and nights.

- Ps 7:11 *[Elohim] is a just judge, And [Elohim] is angry with the wicked every day.* Yahweh is not only angry with the wicked in the daytime, but continually, at night as well as in the daytime. Nevertheless, the verse did not say day and night, but simply “*every day*”, where ‘day’ was intended to include night as well as daylight.
- Gen 17:12 *He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant.* Age is the unbroken length of one’s existence, and covers night as well as daytime. It is the accumulation of several twenty-four-hour periods. An eight-day old male is one who has lived for eight continuous periods of twenty-four hours.
- Gen 7:12 *And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights.* This verse makes it very clear that the rain fell continually at night as well as in the daytime. Nevertheless we are told in Gen 7:17 *Now the flood was on the earth forty days.* So there can be no doubt that “*forty days*” included night as well as daytime.
- Gen 7:24 *And the waters prevailed on the earth one hundred and fifty days.* The floodwaters remained on the earth for a continuous period of one hundred and fifty days. Each of these days would have consisted of night as well as daytime – twenty-four hours. The floodwaters did not disappear each night and return only in the daylight period.
- Lev 23:39 *Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of [Yahweh] for seven days; on the first day there shall be a sabbath-rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath-rest.* The feast was to last for seven consecutive days. This means seven days each of twenty-four hours. On the first of these seven successive twenty-four hour days, was to be a Sabbath-rest. So for how long should this Sabbath-rest be? Obviously twenty-four hours. So the words ‘day’ and ‘days’ in this verse are referring to twenty-four hour intervals.
- 2 Sam 13:37 *But Absalom fled and went to Talmai the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. And David mourned for his son every day.* For a succession of days, David mourned. Would he have mourned only in the daytime but rejoiced at night? Of course not!
- Lev 13:5 *And the priest shall examine him on the seventh day; and indeed if the sore appears to be as it was, and the sore has not spread on the skin, then the priest shall isolate him another seven days.* This can only mean seven continuous days of twenty-four hours, as the quarantine would have been pointless if it had only been in the daytime and not at night also. Used in this context, ‘days’ did not mean only daylight but also included night.
- 2 Chron 21:15 *and you will become very sick with a disease of your intestines, until your intestines come out by reason of the sickness, day by day.* This sickness was not only a daylight sickness. It was to be continuous – “*day by day*”, meaning every day, which included night.
- Luke 11:3 *Give us day by day our daily bread.* Do we eat only in the daytime, or do we eat also at night? This prayer is asking that we be continually provided with the food we need– whether in the daytime or at night, therefore ‘day’ as used here must relate to a twenty-four-hour period.
- 2 Cor 4:16 *Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.* The inward man is being continually renewed, at night as well as in the daytime.

### **Was Hipparchus the founder of a twenty-four-hour day?**

Some may argue that the twenty-four hour day is not Biblical and that it was merely the invention of Hipparchus. The foregoing verses would disprove that. Furthermore, it was Yahweh who on the first day of creation created light, which He separated from the darkness of night. When light returned the following day, His first day of twenty-four hours came to an end.

The concept of a “twenty-four hour day” had existed in Biblical times long before Hipparchus’ subdivision of a day into twenty-four equal parts. We hear references made in the Bible to the third, sixth, ninth, tenth, and eleventh hour of the day, and there is evidence that the daylight period was subdivided in Biblical times into intervals each of twelve hours – hence Yahshua’s remark in John 11:9. The night was divided into four watches, each consisting of three hours. Reference is made in the Bible to the second, third and fourth watches of the night. This would give twenty-four hours for day and night combined. These had existed in Bible times since creation, and the Bible does indicate, as we have already shown, that there were many times when they were combined and called ‘day(s)’.

In our article **‘He arose the THIRD day’** we have quoted several verses from the Bible, which show that *“three days and three nights”* had the same meaning as *“the third day”*, thus making a day equivalent to a day and a night. Please check this out for yourself.

### **Genesis 1:3-5**

We return now to the verses that are used on both sides in defence of either a twelve or twenty-four-hour day.

3 *Then [Elohim] said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.*

4 *And [Elohim] saw the light, that it was good; and [Elohim] divided the light from the darkness.*

5 *[Elohim] called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.*

We have already seen that the word ‘day’ has several meanings in the Bible. One of these meanings is the period of daylight. This is clearly what Yahweh was describing when He *called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night*. ‘Day’ in this case equals light, whereas ‘night’ is darkness, which is the absence of daylight.

Verse 4 tells us that Yahweh separated one from the other. Some persons argue that because the light was separated from the darkness they cannot be rejoined once again to give a twenty-four day. They believe that ‘night’ cannot be part of the day since they are diametrically opposed to each other. It is their understanding that for this reason a day can only consist of twelve hours. How then can they explain the examples we have given in which the word ‘day’ (or ‘days’) definitely referred to a period or periods of day and night?

It is a fact that daylight will never be night or vice versa, for that is what Yahweh ordained on the first day of creation and it will not be changed. Indeed Yahweh Himself has said plainly in Gen 8:22 *“While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease.”* But when the Bible itself refers to some period(s) greater than one interval of daylight, that include daylight as well as night and calls it/them ‘day(s)’, we cannot ignore this fact. Being cognisant of the two different meanings of the word ‘day’ in the Bible does not mean we are trying to remove the separation that Yahweh made. Daylight and night will be always separate although brought together to include a longer time span. It is like having a basket of fruits. Each fruit in the container increases the total in the basket, but nevertheless continues to have its own individual characteristics. They do not and cannot change by being in the same basket. They are brought together to give a basket of fruits although they continue to be different species of fruits. Similar examples can be found in any union, group or association where different persons unite to form a larger and more meaningful unit for some common purpose, even though each participant continues to maintain their individual characteristics. In the same way, light and darkness will never be changed. Day and night will always be different entities but the Bible clearly shows there are periods that span the intervals of daylight and of night and are collectively called ‘day’.

This is very important especially when we consider the fact that there were persons in the Bible who worked in the daytime and/or at night. But Yahweh has said NO WORK must be done on His Sabbath day. Which 'day' could He have meant if it were not the entire period of twenty-four hours during which one may work?

We have seen that it is not always possible to apply the meaning of twelve hours each time the word 'day' is used in the Bible. It would be ludicrous to use this definition in each of the examples we quoted under the heading **'THE CASE FOR A TWENTY-FOUR-HOUR DAY'**.

It is obvious then that Yahweh's definition of 'day' in Gen 1:5a does not cover all Biblical occurrences of the word, since it is merely giving a name to the daylight period. But that same name is also used in the Bible with reference to a twenty-four-hour period. The separation of day from night is no conclusive proof of the length of a Biblical day, since many verses tell us that a day often consisted of daylight as well as night and work was done at any time within a twenty-four-hour interval.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

We have learned from this study, that since the Bible has used the word 'day' or 'days' to mean daylight interval(s) of twelve hours or daylight and night combined covering twenty-four hours, one cannot categorically say that the Biblical day is only twelve or twenty-four hours. Sometimes the word referred to the daylight period of twelve hours, while at other times it meant daylight and night combined into twenty-four hours.

What therefore is the duration of the Sabbath day? There is no verse in the Bible that unequivocally answers this question. The narrative regarding the observation of Yahweh's appointed times, such as the Day of Atonement, Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Feast of Tabernacles indicate that those days spanned twenty-four-hour periods. But that is no proof that the weekly Sabbath day also lasted for twenty-four hours. It would be incorrect to base one's opinion concerning the length of the weekly Sabbath day, purely on the instruction given for these special *"appointed times"*.

The Bible tells us we must be fully convinced in our minds (Rom 14:5) and that you *must always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you* 1 Pet 3:15. You cannot be fully convinced in your minds, about the length of the Sabbath day or be able to defend your stance while there are doubts in your minds. So is the Sabbath day twelve or twenty-four hours?

We have shown that since the Sabbath is the interval of refraining from all work, and since in Bible times (as well as today) work was/is carried out by day or night, then the weekly Sabbath day can only be applicable to all persons, if it includes day workers as well as night workers. This is only possible, if the Biblical Sabbath day is twenty-four hours. Daylight Sabbath cannot be extended to include night workers without changing the meaning of 'day' to include night. This would not be acceptable to persons who maintain that the Biblical day is only the daylight.

The Bible allows one to work for six days or nights, each having twelve hours. There are thus twelve periods of day and night in a week, when one is allowed to work. Now if the Sabbath day ends at evening, there is no reason why someone could not work on a Saturday night. This means that a Sabbath keeper could work for thirteen-fourteenth of a week and have a short Sabbath rest for only one-fourteenth of a week. Is that compatible with the command that says we should work for six-seventh of a week and rest for one seventh?

In deciding how long the Sabbath day lasts, one has to consider **ALL** the facts and not take up a position that fails to include all the information the Bible gives to us. The twenty-four-hour Sabbath day covers not only the full range of 'day' as is often used in the Bible but also all periods during which one may work. No one or time is excluded. The twelve-hour Sabbath day on the other hand excludes intervals that the Bible often includes in its usage of the word 'day' and ignores the fact that many persons in Bible times as well as today work at night. It is incomprehensible how one can say the Sabbath day is only for the daylight period, since persons who work only at night do not even begin to keep the Sabbath command by working for six daylight periods. A night worker who rests on the seventh daylight, is merely doing what he/she does each day of the week, and does not need to abstain from his night work, since according to daylight Sabbath day keepers, he would not be dishonouring Yahweh's Sabbath, since he /she works only at night.

Even if you were wrong in observing a twenty-four hour Sabbath day you would still be covering the twelve-hour period of daylight as well. Therefore you would have the satisfaction of knowing you are observing the fullest length of the Sabbath day that Yahweh could require of you. It is true that by doing this you could be giving to Yahweh more than He is asking. Conversely someone who observes a twelve-hour Sabbath day could not express this same confidence. They would be giving to Yahweh the shortest time they feel justified to give. If they were wrong, they would have robbed Yahweh of His Sabbath time.

When it comes to pleasing and obeying Yahweh, it is better to be magnanimous than stingy. It is wiser to have Yahweh's approval by giving to Him more than He may be asking than to be disapproved for deliberately giving Him too little. It is more reassuring to have peace of mind in knowing you are definitely pleasing Him, than to think you may be displeasing Him.

The twenty-four-hour Sabbath day is consistent with and embraces all available information contained in the Bible, with regard to the varied meanings of the word 'day'. It is endorsed by the fact that work was done in the night as well during the daylight in Bible times. It is the only way the Sabbath command can be applied to all persons irrespective of their usual working times.

Let none of us be like the time-watchers in Amos's day who asked, *When will the New Moon be past, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may trade wheat?* Amos 8:5.

We pray that your observance of Yahweh's Sabbath day will not be a chore but the delight it is supposed to be (Isa 58:13). When we are giving willingly to Yahweh, no price is too high. He who gave us so much cannot be out-given.

Please complete your study of this subject by reading our companion article ['When does the Sabbath day begin and end?'](#)

*I delight to do Your will, O my [Elohim], And Your law is within my heart* Ps 40:8.

*Our beliefs must fit in with the Scriptures especially when the Scriptures do not support our beliefs. Buel Hallpike*