

The Biblical International Date Line

The International dateline is not something that most of us have considered. Most of us have just taken for granted that we keep the Sabbath on the seventh day, as scripture requires. Those who travel across it though and those who live East of Jerusalem but West of the present dateline, may have wondered if the Bible has anything to say on this subject, so let's examine the biblical evidence, and then come to our own conclusion.

We know that God has provided the instruction and examples in the Bible for the month and the year and He would not fail to provide the needed information on the dateline, because the fact is that, though many people have not thought about this, there has to be one somewhere – a definite line on the earth where God's day begins. **Any conclusions drawn without including that vital dateline must be invalid!**

This is simply because the earth rotates. If we travel East, against the rotation, the day is shorter as the sun seems to come towards us, and sunset is earlier. If we travel West, with the sun, the days are longer than 24 hours. Of course, without knowing where **the true** dateline is, those of us who live East of Jerusalem, but West of the present International Date Line, do not securely know when to keep the annual Holy Days which Jesus Christ kept.

*Also, we are concerned to make sure we keep the **seventh day** Holy. Genesis 2:3, 'And God blessed the **seventh day**, and sanctified it: because in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.'* We need to keep a tight check on the days, and we know that at the time of Jesus the Jews were keeping the correct day. Jesus vouched for that by His agreement of both the Sabbath and Holy Days back then. Since then, the Romans drove many Jews from the 'Holy Land' in a great diaspora, but, no matter where they went, East or West, they carried the same day with them, and no matter where they ended up, today most are in agreement about which day is the 7th, from Hong Kong, to Cape town, to San Francisco.

They did this without any reference to an international dateline, because travel back then was slow. They had no watches and they would not have noticed that the day was either a little longer or shorter, depending on whether they were moving West or East. Actually, the dateline had not been invented then anyway, it only came about after men began to circumnavigate the earth in ships, and depending on which way they went, they either seemed to 'lose' or 'gain' a day against the calendar they started out from. When the Sabbath was restored at Sinai, the Israelites began to keep it, though they were not in Israel, and later Daniel kept the Sabbath in Babylon, as did Ezekiel and Ezra, though they started it long before it commenced in Jerusalem. Paul travelled far to the West and kept the same Sabbath, but much later than those at Jerusalem. **Obviously then, there is no rule that we should keep the identical time with Jerusalem.**

So, the fact is that, no matter which way the Jews travelled from Jerusalem, even eventually as far as America, West, or China East, they retained the knowledge of the true Sabbath, even though much later, disagreements arose amongst their scholars, which have not changed the majority of Jewish practice, and to this day the vast majority of Jews worldwide keep the Sabbath on the same date.

So, why is it that among some Christian 7th Day Sabbath keepers, there is some confusion about which day is the seventh? Well, these days we travel by air and it is not uncommon to cross half the

world in 24 hours. It then becomes very noticeable that you have 'lost' or 'gained time', and the world has had to agree on the dateline, the longitude East or West of the prime meridian which was placed at Greenwich, England, where a new calendar day begins.

Because England was the dominant seafaring nation when this occurred, all longitudinal lines are **based on Greenwich**, as 0 degrees, and, as a result, the dateline was set at 180 degrees East, on a great longitudinal circle that encompasses the globe (there are 360 degrees in whole) exactly on the opposite side of the earth from Greenwich. That was where each new day would start, at twelve midnight, and the day would progress West around the earth.

This proved very convenient, because 180 degrees East, is over the Pacific Ocean, the largest and emptiest body of water on the planet. Although they bent the line a little to avoid one or two islands, **it avoids all land, which is the third vital requirement to avoid confusion**. Imagine if the dateline went over land. It could happen that people on one side of a street were keeping Friday, and those on the other, Saturday, an impossible situation, so the choice seemed logical enough.

This positioning of the start of the day in the Pacific Ocean, upsets some Christians though, because of the scriptural belief that Jerusalem is the centre of the world, Ezekiel 5:5, *'Thus says the Lord GOD; This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her.'* And 38:12, *'To take plunder, and to carry off spoil; to turn your hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, who have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land.'* And that **the law must go forth from Zion**, Isaiah 2:3, *'And many people shall go and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.'*

This is quite true, for all our attention is centred on Jerusalem, and observations from there with regard to calendar issues, and the Biblical dateline **must** include this principle, but then, too early conclusions, such as, 'those to the East cannot start the Sabbath until it has started in Jerusalem', have been drawn, because certain scriptures are not recognised or considered.

Men have often felt the need to introduce their own ideas and traditions, without biblical confirmation; witness the disagreements of the obscure Jewish sages about the dateline. Jesus condemned that approach, and told us to look at scripture. Without those scriptures, some have suggested that Jerusalem should be the dateline. This is totally impossible because that would mean half the city keeping one day, and half the next. Others have suggested a boundary of Israel at Euphrates. That suggestion is equally impractical, as a look at the map will prove, for such a line would also cut through Africa and Asia, once again providing similar problems in many more areas of the world, and there are no dateline scriptures to back this suggestion.

So, let us imagine Jerusalem as it will be in God's Kingdom, as the prime meridian, reflecting its position then, as the capital of the world, the very centre of the earth. **Based upon Jerusalem**, this pushes all longitudes roughly 35 degrees to the East, and on the exact opposite of the world the new dateline then becomes where now we find 145 degrees West line, which is right in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, only crossing land when it hits Alaska, where could then skirt its Western coastline. Placing the dateline there, makes it very little different from the present man made dateline, but then Jerusalem becomes the very centre of the Sabbath day, starting its day 12 hours after it commences at sunset in the Pacific. Then, and by that regime, all the world shares much of the same Sabbath day, unlike the system adopted by some, who now keep Sunday Sabbath in Australia and New Zealand. Some thus now only share a common six hours with Jerusalem, but then would share up to 18 hours of the Sabbath with that special city!

That sounds good, but we need scriptures for our beliefs, not just logic, or imagination!
Let us go back to the Creation. Or rather, re-creation, in Genesis 1. In Genesis 1:4, God makes a statement which has more significance than we may have previously recognised *‘And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.’*

First, please understand that this is not the original creation of light. The sun had shone on the earth for millennia, but that was before Satan’s rebellion, when *‘The earth became (as it should be translated) without form and void.’* (verse 2. Read our article ‘Dinosaurs and Man’). Now, God allowed light to penetrate the thick cloud and darkness for the first time, verse 3, *‘And God said, Let there be light; and there was light’*, creating the first [new] day. Later in verse 14 God cleared away more of the cloud and mist so that the sun and moon could become visible from the earth again to enable them to be used to determine His appointed times, or Holy Days (‘seasons’ KJV).

God divided (0914 badal-to-divide-distinguish, differ, select) the light from the darkness. What is it that separates light from the darkness? Is it not the time when sunset would normally occur? So that evening, as God looked down upon the earth from Heaven, He began the first day, verse 5, *‘And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.’* He alone knew where the first day started upon the earth, but at that point He had not created the continents, let alone Jerusalem. His day however, started not at midnight, but at sunset time, **and so was born the true dateline.**

Later, God separated the land from the seas, verses 9-10,13. *‘And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good. 13, And the evening and the morning were the third day.’*

Now the continents existed, and a dateline existed, which had been established on the very first day! But where? Was it at the place which was to become Jerusalem, Euphrates, or Pacific? Our God is not the author of confusion. He has given us the year, and the month, and has not neglected to show us in His Word where the day starts, in total agreement with the experience of men like Daniel, Ezra and Paul, who travelled far from Jerusalem, but kept the same day!

We find the solution in Job 26:10. Here in this chapter, Job has been picturing the awesome creative power of God, who considers all things, verse 7, 13-14. Here we see a remarkable illustration of how the inspired Word of God anticipated the much later discoveries of man about the condition of our planet, setting forth the facts as a proof of divine creation. So it is with verse 10, where we find a verse which needs careful investigation to understand, for its meaning has long been hidden in the King James version.

Verse 10, *‘He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end.’ KJV*

Let us break down the key words here :

‘compassed’, 2328 - described a circle, Brown Driver Briggs, ‘hath drawn as a circle’.

‘al’, 5921- the preposition, ‘on’.

‘the waters’, 6440 - the face, 4325 water, BDB, waters.

‘bounds’, 2706 – an enactment, **statute**, decree. BDB, **statute**, something prescribed.

‘until’, 5704 – as far, till, up to, BDB, as far as, even to, up to, until, while.

‘the day’ 0216 – illumination, BDB, light.

‘night’ 2822 - the dark, darkness.

‘come to an end’ 8503 - completion, extremity, BDB, “unto the end of (= boundary between light and darkness)”

That’s quite a verse! Putting the essence of these words together : “He has marked out a circle on the face of the waters **as a statute** even to the boundary [to divide, Genesis 1:4] between light and darkness.” Modern translations better approach the Hebrew. eg. *‘He has inscribed a circle on the face of the waters at the boundary and between light and darkness.’* ESV

That makes sense, but how does this world encompassing circle have any connection to Jerusalem, ‘in the midst of the earth’, for we know that the law must go forth from Jerusalem?

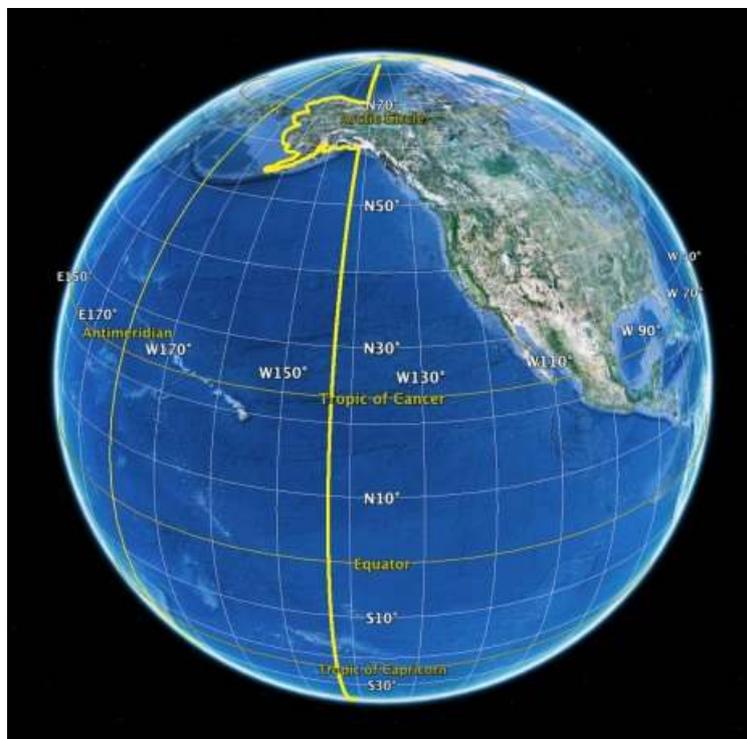
When the prime meridian is redrawn from Greenwich, and **based upon Jerusalem**, and then projected around the globe, it forms one great circle, and once past the poles becomes 180 degrees East or West of Jerusalem right over the waters of the Pacific, when Jerusalem is 0 degrees. This, I believe, is what God is describing in Job 26:10, **as a statute**, which actually determines the **biblical** International Date Line. Thus, that statute (a law which will be active in the millennium) directly links Jerusalem to the circle which now marks out the division between light and darkness, the beginning of God’s days, fulfilling the requirement in Isaiah 2:3, that the law will go forth from Zion, or Jerusalem. *‘And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.’*

In fact, as we have seen, we are told that God created the dateline first, in Genesis 1:4, and then later positioned Jerusalem on that line (when it is extended around the globe). How wonderful and awesome are His far sighted powers!

It is, I believe, apparent from these verses, that God wanted all people to share as much of the same Holy Day as possible. We see the same principle revealed by looking to Jerusalem to provide the start of each month, rather than examining the moon in our own part of the world, though of course for many centuries Christians had to use the moon in their area if they were far away from Jerusalem. The Jews for example, far away from Jerusalem, often used to observe 2 days for the Feast of Trumpets because it is on the first day of the month, to make sure they observed the correct day. Today we have instant communication, which makes it simpler. God carefully positioned Jerusalem *‘in the midst of the nations,’* (Ezekiel 5:5) and also at the centre of the day, to enable the most people to share the same Holy time.



He ensured this by placing Jerusalem directly opposite what seems to be the biblical international dateline, on a great circle which goes right around the globe, actually appearing as the longitude 144.8 degrees West today, (Jerusalem is now 35.2 degrees East of the prime meridian at Greenwich, so $+180$ degrees = 144.8 degrees West).



This line then lies 35.2167 degrees East of the present international dateline (which has been bent to avoid islands) right through the largely empty Pacific Ocean, but crosses Alaska unless, as a boundary, it is bent to skirt its shores.

In this way, even New Zealand and Australia share most of the Sabbath with Jerusalem, as does Europe and even the Americas, and the problem of the position of the true international dateline, which cannot be over land, could be solved (Genesis 1:4) while fulfilling the statute of Job 26:10.

Consider these verses carefully before coming to your own conclusion, in ‘fear and trembling,’ before God’s Word (Philippians 2:12, ‘[Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.](#)’) for God’s Sabbath and Holy Days must be determined **by scripture**, for those East of Jerusalem.

.....

The argument for a **Sunday Sabbath** East of Jerusalem is typically seen in -

<http://www.chcpublishations.net/CHCPIDL.htm>

Others in favour of the **Saturday** conclusion, though without **both** key scriptures are - -

<http://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Library.sr/CT/HWA/k/457/Has-Time-Been-Lost.htm>

Herbert W Armstrong 1972

<http://yahuranger.com/2012/07/04/the-scriptural-international-dateline-part-3-of-3/>