

Does the Bible give us data from which we can know whether the world was created in six 24-hour days or in a larger period of time? To answer this question we must determine the meaning of the word "day" in Genesis 1.

This word is used many times in the Bible. Its area of meaning includes three different senses. It is used in at least two of these in Genesis 1-2.

The Hebrew word translated "day" is frequently used in the Old Testament to mean a 24-hour day. However, this is far from being its only usage. It is also used to indicate periods much shorter or much longer than 24 hours.

The shorter use is illustrated in Genesis 1:5, "And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night". This usage would hardly apply to the days of creation.

The longer use is also not uncommon in Scripture, as, for instance, in John 8:56, where Jesus said, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day", and in the phrase "the day of the Lord". This use is clearly present, even in the early part of Genesis, for Genesis 2:4 speaks of "the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens", thus combining the work of all six creative days into one long period which is itself called a day.

The Bible does not make clear whether the word "day" as used in Genesis 1 with reference to the six days of creation means a 24-hour period or a longer period of time. It is especially clear that there is no warrant for considering that the word "day" would represent a 24-hour period in the early part of the chapter, since verses 14-18 make it clear that it was not until the fourth day that the sun, moon and stars were set in the heavens as measures of time. Since the length of the first three days is thus indeterminate,