

There is no Biblical statement that God specified the precise time measures that His people should use, but when He made the sun, moon, and stars He said that they should "serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years" (Gen. 1:14). In view of this Scriptural statement it is natural to expect that the Bible would represent periods of time in terms of natural phenomena rather than on the basis of any artificial system.

There are three natural divisions of time:

(1) The division between day and night. In most parts of the year the length of the day constantly changes, oscillating within regular limits, but the total of day and night remains practically the same throughout the year.

(2) The word "month" originally meant the time between the first appearance of the new moon in one cycle and its first appearance in the next (about 29 1/2 days later). In ancient Israel it was customary each month to look for witnesses to the appearance of the new moon. If the priests decided that the men who claimed to have seen the new moon during the previous night were dependable witnesses they would proclaim the fact that a new month had begun. This practice was continued until the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Thus in most countries the length of the month oscillated between 29 and 30 days. The one important exception was Egypt, where an artificial *month of 30 days* was established at an early time, having twelve months in the year and adding five extra days at the end of each year so as to make it correspond with the regular round of seasons. This very ancient arrangement was continued in Egypt until the time of Julius Caesar, who established a similar practice at Rome, adding the five extra days to five different months instead of at the end of the year. Caesar introduced leap years to prevent the year from getting out of harmony with the changing seasons.