

Bible does not say that all this occurred at that time, nor that it did not. It is not complete in this regard, as in many others.

The existence of such a gap seems like a tremendous assumption to make without more evidence than can be found for it. On the other hand, there is absolutely no ground on which one can dogmatically deny that there may have been such a gap. It is one of the matters on which God's revelation is not complete.

A third place where the question of completeness occurs is in relation to the use of the word "day" in these chapters. The chain of events in connection with the formation and populating of this earth, is divided among six days. Exactly what does this word day mean?

It is a rather widespread idea that the commonest use of the word day is to indicate a period of twenty-four hours. Yet a little thought will show that this is by no means its commonest use. In Genesis 1, the first occurrence of the word is in verse 5, where it says that "God called the light Day and the darkness he called Night." Here very evidently it does not indicate a twenty-four-hour period. How long is the light period of the alternation between light and darkness? There is probably no place on earth where it is twenty-four hours. At the North Pole it would be approximately six months. In northern Scandinavia in mid-winter it might not be more than an hour or two. The word day, as most commonly used, indicates a period of greatly varying length.

In our present passage there is still another use of the word. This is the one found in Genesis 2:4, where all the events of Genesis 1 are summarized in the phrase, "in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens." Here the one day includes the whole six previous ones. Sometimes in the Bible, as also in common speech, "day" indicates a long period of time. We might say that in Abraham Lincoln's day automobiles were not in use. We would not mean one particular twenty-four-hour day, but the entire period in which he lived. The Bible speaks of "the day of the Lord," which is clearly a period of many years in duration.

Thus the word day really indicates simply a period of time. It is very commonly used for a twenty-four-hour-period, but this by no means exhausts its uses. Which use is involved in the six days of Genesis 1 is nowhere clearly stated. This does not mean that we are free simply to assume anything we want. It means that we should recognize that this is a matter on which God's revelation is not complete. We can gather evidences, and suggest possibilities, but unless we find absolute proof we must leave it as an open question.

At first sight the words in verse 5, "and the evening and the morning were the first day," might seem to indicate that a twenty-four-hour day was involved. However, a little investigation will demonstrate that in such statements in this passage, the terms evening and morning are used figuratively, and simply mean beginning and ending. Evening is the end of a period of light. Clearly the first day could not begin with the end of a period of light. Moreover, Genesis 1 is written from God's viewpoint, rather than from that of any man on the earth. From God's viewpoint it would always be evening and always be morning. In Genesis 1 these terms are simply figurative expressions, and therefore give no indication as to the length of the period involved.

In the third, fifth, and sixth days we find an evidence which suggests that more than a twenty-four-hour period is involved. On the third day God did not say "Let the earth be covered with vegetation and great trees standing at full height." He said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind." We then read: "And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree . . ." Similarly, on the fifth day He did not say, "Let the waters be filled with great whales and all sorts of fish." He said, "Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life," etc. On the