

CREATION

Creation does not occupy a great deal of space in the Bible, but is clearly presented in Gen.1-2, and in Heb.11:3, and is emphasized in Isa.40-51 and in the latter part of Job. The Bible clearly teaches that the universe, and all matter, had a beginning, and came into existence through the Will of the eternal God. In Gen.1:1, the words "the heaven and the earth" summarize all the various materials of the universe. This verse has been interpreted in various ways, but all agree in its essential significance. This is true even of the new interpretation that takes it as a mere introduction to what follows, rendering it: "When God began to create heaven and earth," for even on this interpretation v.2 would describe the situation that came into existence shortly after God began to create, rather than to contradict Heb.11:3 by implying that there was pre-existing matter.

Some hold that there is a long gap between verses 1 and 2, in which God's perfect creation came into chaos through a great catastrophe. Hebrew syntax permits such a view but does not require it.

The length of the creative days of Gen.1 is not stated in the Bible. The Hebrew word "day" may mean a period of light between two periods of darkness, a period of light together with the preceding period of darkness, or a long period of time. All three usages occur frequently in the Bible, including Gen.1-2. No one of them is exactly 24 hours, though the second one is near it. There is no indication as to which of the three is meant, though the type of expression used in the third, fifth and sixth days seems to suggest a long period. The Bible gives no information as to how long ago the original creation of matter occurred, or the first day of creation began, or the sixth day ended.