

There are many other similar examples in the Bible which could be given, but people who talk boldly about always following the "plain sense" of the Scripture should be silenced by encountering even the above. Undoubtedly they will say, "Under certain circumstances it is necessary to alter the 'plain sense' of a Scripture passage." But then we will ask who it is that we should depend on for telling us when the "plain sense" should be altered or adjusted. Are the extreme creationists going to boldly refuse the "plain sense" of the above commands of Christ, and then tell us that they are the only ones who can inform us as to what the true sense of the statements in the first chapter of Genesis are? There is no way that they can use rules of Hebrew or Greek grammar, biblical history, or rules of context to justify such an extreme policy of interpretation.

Two other examples which should be of special interest from the standpoint of what is often called "creation science," are found in Jn. 12:24 and I Cor. 15:36, and in Matt. 26:26-28 (and corresponding statements in Mark 14, Luke 22, and I Cor. 11:24). In the first example (Jn. 12:24 and I Cor. 15:36) we have very strong, divinely inspired statements by Jesus, and by Paul, that a grain of wheat that has been put into the ground will never produce a new plant unless it "dies" (ἀποθάνῃ, aor subjunctive of ἀποθνήσκω). This is the main N. T. Greek word for "die," and every reader knows what the "plain sense" of the word "die" is. Yet we now know very well that a wheat grain will not produce a plant if the grain or seed dies. We know this because scientific investigation more than 100 years ago discovered that seeds have embryos in them, and that the seed will never produce a plant unless this embryo stays alive until it pushes its way up through the soil. Even extreme creationists admit this. (And yet in the next breath they will tell us that we can never use human observation of nature, or scientific data, as a limiting factor in interpreting the Bible.) So, we have to realize that the "plain sense" of the word "die" in Jn. 12:24 and I Cor. 15:36 does not mean anything like "to cease to live." It only meant that the main bulk of the seed becomes partially decomposed (while the inner part gains an increasing level of life functions).

The second of the two examples mentioned in the preceding paragraph is the one in which Christ stated, concerning the bread eaten at the Lord's supper, "This is my body." This should be another warning to those who claim that they always accept the "plain sense" of Scripture passages. Some of those who make such a claim state the rule as, "If the plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense." But, alas, who can claim to be an accurate judge of whether or not a given expression "makes sense"? Martin Luther stood in a famous church council persistently repeating, "This is my body," (in Latin or German) until the group had to permanently split. He was following "the plain sense" of Scripture, but those of us who are not Roman Catholics, Lutherans, or Greek Orthodox say that he was wrong in insisting on "the plain sense." And it is evident that a high percentage of young-earth creationists belong to Christian groups which say that the bread and wine only represent or symbolize the body and blood of Christ. Here again we have the factor of human observation and scientific investigation deeply influencing our interpretation of Scripture--in spite of the fact that most members of the modern creationism movement strongly insist that if we do this we are violating the Scriptures. (Some of them would probably say, "Scientific tests easily show that wine or grape juice are not even similar to blood; so, Jesus must have meant something different when He said it was his blood.")

Thus we have to conclude that it is extremely inconsistent to recognize human observation and scientific data as a major, legitimate factor in interpreting some parts of the Bible, but at the same time refuse to admit that what God has allowed us to learn concerning the earth's crust can be an aid in understanding the brief summary of creation contained in the first chapter of Genesis. Of course we should refuse to apply the results of human observation in any case where it might flatly deny a definitely absolute statement in the biblical account of creation. This would be such as in Genesis 1:21, where we read, "God created (bara) great sea monsters." Thus we are