

Languages are spoken things and languages is a rather inaccurate way of representing what you speak. What you speak is also not an exact way of expressing truth.

Representing the extreme I think we need to avoid, I have this book by Rushdoony, The Mythology of Science. In it (p.112) he says, "In view of the fact that Jesus rested the doctrine of life after death on the tense of a verb (Mk. 12:18-27), and Paul the covenant of faith on the singular form of see (Gal. 3:16), it must be asserted that Scripture speaks precisely even if it does not use the language of the laboratory, which is very far from being the only form of precision." I don't think you can prove his statement that "Scripture speaks precisely." The question is What do you mean by precisely? I don't think the term precisely can be used of most sentences.

In order to make a thing precise you have to have a mathematical statement or you have to have a great many sentences in order to make a thing precisely clear. Suppose I were to say to you: Last Summer I made a trip to San Francisco." That might be a true statement even if I only went to Oakland and did not cross the bay to San Francisco. I could use San Francisco for the general area. It would not necessarily be precise.

Suppose I said, Last summer I made a trip to San Francisco ~~by train~~. Someone might say, How did you go? You cannot learn that from the sentence? Did I go by train? by plane? on horseback? on foot? by boat through Panama Canal? These questions are not answered. I might say, I went by train. Alright. Did you go straight thru by train? Did you stop over somewhere. I stopped over in Chicago. Did you also stop over in Chicago and Albuquerque? It doesn't say. Just about any sentence you can make includes or raises many questions with which the sentence does not deal. So the question is, What do you mean by precisely?

Someone can say the Scripture speaks of the sea Solomon made and it speaks of its diameter and circumference in such a way as to speak of its diameter as 10 cubits and its circumference as 30 cubits. That has been pointed to as an error in the Bible. Because it's not actually the circumference of a circle, it's not 3x the diameter, but is 3 and 1/7x. If the Bible had said, It was 3 and 1/7 times as far around it that would be more precise. But I can't say it would be more true. You can give it in tens--3 10's and one ten. That is absolutely true, but it is not precise. So's we'll say it's 3 and 1/7 times as far around as across. Someone can say: That's not precise because it's not 3 and 1/7th; it is 3.1416. We say ~~2x~~ it is 31.1416 cu. around instead of 30. But that's not precise because it's 3.14159. I understand that the relation between the diameter and the circumference has been worked out to 100 decimals and you can still go out further. You can never give precisely the relation between the diameter and the circumference of a circle. It is a matter of how far you want to go in your effort to be precise.

So I immediately feel hesitant when Rushdoony says that it must be asserted the Scripture speaks precisely. I'd rather use a different word. Then I look at the illustrations he gives.