

# THE MUSTARD SEED REVISITED: A Look at a Critical Review

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## Introduction

*Then He said, "To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it? It is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth; but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade." (Mark 4:30-32)*

Truth In My Days recently posted an article<sup>[1]</sup> examining and solving the putative problem occasioned by Mark 4:31, in which **Jesus is said by skeptics to have made a factual mistake in that He said that the mustard seed "is smaller than all the seeds on earth,"** when there are actually seeds that are smaller than the mustard seed.

**As we showed, Jesus did not make a mistake;** the statement "is smaller than all the seeds on earth" translates "is smaller than all the seeds ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (epi tēs gēs)." This prepositional phrase, ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, is the same one that is used earlier in the sentence, when Jesus says, "a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground," i.e. "a mustard seed which, when it is sown ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς." Here, from among the attested meanings for this word in the BDAG lexicon,<sup>[2]</sup> γῆ should be translated as "**ground for agricultural use, soil, earth,**" in the sense of a "limited area" of ground for agricultural use. The second appearance of ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, inasmuch as it is the exact same three-word prepositional phrase in the same sentence, should not be translated differently (as "on the earth") but should be translated the same way, as on "**ground for agricultural use, soil, earth**" in the sense of a "limited area" of ground for agricultural use. Jesus, therefore, was comparing the size of the mustard seed sown on a plot of agricultural ground to the other seeds on that same plot, and not to every seed on earth. There is no reason to suppose that smaller flower seeds would be found on that agricultural plot.

**Two days after this article was posted, one Brad Cooper posted a response on his blog[3] in which he took issue with our article.** Cooper argued vehemently that the solution to this conundrum was not to see γῆ as a “limited area of ground for agricultural use,” but **instead to see σπέρμα (sperma = seed) as referring in the context only to “agricultural seed,”** so that Jesus was actually saying, “a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is **smaller than all the agricultural seeds** on earth” rather than all seeds of any sort.

The matter is important. As we showed in our previous article, “limited area of ground for agricultural use” is an attested meaning for the word γῆ, so that even technically Jesus did not make a mistake. For Cooper’s suggestion to be viable, **he must show that “agricultural seed” is an attested meaning for the word σπέρμα.** Otherwise, we must believe that Jesus only *meant* “all agricultural seeds” when He actually *said* “all seeds,” which would mean that at least technically He made an error.

**This is not trivial.** Jesus Himself said to Nicodemus,

*“If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?” (John 3:12)*

That would indicate that He would have been careful to be fully trustworthy on “earthly” things; otherwise, if one cannot trust Him on earthly things (including such a simple matter as seed size), why indeed would they trust Him about “heavenly things”?

So let us proceed to examine Cooper’s case and see whether he is able to show that “agricultural seed” is an attested meaning of σπέρμα. If not, his case must be rejected.

## **Examining Cooper’s Case**

According to Cooper, we erred in maintaining that γῆ should here be taken as “**ground for agricultural use, soil, earth,**” in the sense of a “limited area” of ground for agricultural use, because “**that is not what Bauer is indicating in his Greek lexicon.**”[4] He does agree, more or less, with this understanding of γῆ in this passage, but only because of the context, saying

*It is a valid interpretation of the word in context but it is not the straightforward meaning given by Bauer.*[\[5\]](#)

**Cooper's proposed solution is that the key to the problem lies not in the definition of γῆ but in the definition of σπέρμα (sperma = "seed").**

According to Cooper, "the word *sperma* originally referred only to seed that was to be sown for the purpose of agriculture,"[\[6\]](#) which means that when Jesus said that the mustard seed "is smaller than all the seeds on earth," He was by definition including only agricultural seeds, not any other type, including flower seeds. Cooper's proposed sense of the passage, then, is

*When the mustard seed (kokkos) is sown (speiro) upon the soil (ges), it is the smallest of agricultural seeds (sperma) sown (probably an assumed verb here based on sentence structure) on the soil (ges) but grows and becomes the largest of agricultural plants (lachanon).*

According to Cooper, this is "indeed the best scholarly solution (and not the "gambit" that [Tors] declares it to be)."[\[7\]](#)

Cooper's attempt at a solution is certainly noteworthy; the idea of rejecting a solution based on the attested meaning of a word in favour of one based on an unattested proposed meaning for another word is nothing if not noteworthy. But, as we follow his reasoning through his blog post, we will see that his claim is simply unsustainable.

**Cooper's first error is his insistence that the meaning of γῆ that I drew from BDAG is not actually there.** He says

*Tors determines that "earth" should be "that limited area of ground for agricultural use" -by which he means to say that the word refers to a specific piece of property or a certain field. But **that is not what Bauer is indicating in his Greek lexicon.** It is a valid interpretation of the word in context but **it is not the straightforward meaning given by Bauer.***[\[8\]](#)

It is difficult to understand how Cooper got this idea. In my article I did quote the relevant passage from BDAG. However, let's make it more clear. BDAG lists six separate definitions for γῆ, with sub-definitions for two of them. The sixth is

“Earth **w. ref. to limited areas** and the material that forms its surface.”[9] There are two sub-definitions under this sixth definition, and it is important to note that, since they are sub-definitions, the terms of the main definition apply to them i.e. they refer to “**limited areas.**” Now, the second sub-definition here is “of ground for agricultural use, *soil, earth*, receiving seed.” **So this attested meaning for γῆ is “limited area of ground for agricultural use.”** Now, in my original article, how did I say that ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς should be translated in this passage? I said it “should be translated as ‘**on the ground**’ (specifically a ‘**limited area**’ of ground for agricultural use).”[10]

Cooper, remember, said that

*Tors determines that ‘earth’ should be ‘that limited area of ground for agricultural use’ ... But **that is not what Bauer is indicating in his Greek lexicon ... it is not the straightforward meaning given by Bauer.***[11]

Yet as we have seen **that definition comes word for word from BDAG.** It is exceedingly difficult to see how Cooper could have made such an error.

Therefore, regarding Cooper’s claim that “[Tors] is doing exactly the thing that he castigates Wallace for doing”[12] - if by that Cooper means ascribing an unattested meaning to a Greek word - **it is clearly wrong.**

**Actually, Cooper here is more wrong than he realizes.** He writes that I “castigat[ed] Daniel Wallace for limiting the meaning of ‘seed’ (*sperma*) to ‘sown seed,’”[13] and again, “that word ‘seed’ (*sperma*) which Wallace maintained should be translated as ‘sown seed,’”[14] and again, “as Wallace put it: ‘sown seed.’”[15] **Yet Wallace never said that *sperma* should be translated as “sown seed”!** It seems Cooper did not read what I wrote carefully (and it does not seem likely that he consulted Wallace).

Here is what I wrote regarding Wallace:

*Dr. Daniel Wallace includes ‘σπέρμα is used, indicating a sown seed; the mustard seed is the **smallest of all sown seeds**’*[16] *in his list of approaches to this problem.*[17]

Again, with different highlighting:

*Dr. Daniel Wallace includes ‘σπέρμα is used, indicating a sown seed; the mustard seed is the smallest of all sown seeds’ in his **list of approaches to this problem.***

That is, Wallace provided a “**list of approaches**” taken by apologists to deal with this problem, and the suggestion that σπέρμα (*sperma*) should be understood as “**sown seed**” is indeed *included* on that list, but **Wallace himself expresses no support on his part for that approach.**

On the contrary; if σπέρμα meant “**sown seed,**” there would be no difficulty with this passage at all, and if Wallace agreed with that idea he would not see this passage as problematic. Yet Wallace writes,

*This text has created a theological difficulty for some American evangelicals; **Jesus seems to be declaring the mustard seed to be smaller than all other seeds** when, in fact, **it is not the smallest (the wild orchid is smaller).**[\[18\]](#)*

Please note that not only is Wallace *not* saying that σπέρμα should be translated as “**sown seed,**” **he is making it plain that the orchid seed is a valid referent for σπέρμα in this verse. So what Wallace says is the exact opposite of what Cooper claims Wallace says.**[\[19\]](#) This sort of carelessness is difficult to understand. (It is ironic, then, that Cooper tells us that “**Wallace is right on the money,**” isn’t it?)

So, what have we seen so far? Cooper was completely wrong about the BDAG definition of γῆ, so that the definition I said should be used in Mark 4:31, “limited area of ground for agricultural use,” is indeed attested, which he denied. And three separate times he averred that Wallace said σπέρμα should be translated as “**sown seed,**” although Wallace not only said no such thing, but indicated the opposite. Things are not looking good for our critic.

**Cooper now turns his attention to Greek reference works.** He argues that

*Tors [sic] whole argument hinges on his determination that any interpretation must rely on a straightforward reading of a Greek dictionary, and in this case, Bauer’s [Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#).*[\[20\]](#)

Now, it should be noted that this book, known as BDAG, was compiled by scholars who combed through the extant Greek literature of the relevant time period in order to determine which English words are appropriate translations of the Greek words (i.e. the “attested meanings”). **So, yes, an interpretation must actually be based on the attested meaning of the Greek words used; that is the whole basis of communication.** So if Cooper is hinting that my approach is incorrect, he is wrong.

**Next, Cooper seemingly tries to challenge the reliability of the BDAG lexicon’s** view of the meaning of σπέρμα, telling us that

*dictionaries are produced by humans. Bauer’s (BAGD) is the standard Greek lexicon, but it is not perfect. Bauer was a great Greek scholar and no one has surpassed his work as a number one go-to reference for the meaning of Greek words. One reason is because it is so exhaustive in scope. But it still has weaknesses. Bauer was a human being and not on some ethereal plane far above Wallace and the rest of us.*

Cooper’s statement makes it seem as if the BDAG lexicon was produced by one man, Bauer. Actually, Walter Bauer did the original work, but it was augmented by W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich when it was translated by them into English, and extensive additions and corrections were made by Frederick William Danker for the current (3<sup>rd</sup>) English edition.[\[21\]](#) **So it is the work of four scholars, not one,** and yes, they were all human beings and “**not perfect,**” **but their information is the best there is** and certainly carries more weight than the personal opinions of Cooper. He carps that “**In this case, Bauer did not see the need to differentiate between ‘seeds used for agricultural purposes’ and ‘seeds of plants in general,’**”[\[22\]](#) but what that means is that **Bauer**[\[23\]](#) **did not find such a differentiation in the relevant Greek literature.**

Cooper then avers that

*The other weakness is that Bauer does not give any etymologies (studies of word origins)*[\[24\]](#)

This is a bogus complaint; etymologies are interesting but they are certainly not necessary to determining meaning, and may do more harm than good.[\[25\]](#)

(Cooper certainly startles us by saying, “Interestingly, Tors is simply pitting Bauer’s Greek reference work against Wallace’s Greek reference work.”[26] In point of fact, **Wallace has never written a Greek-English lexicon**; the comments of his that I quoted came from his book on Greek *grammar*,[27] which simply cannot be set against, or with, BDAG on a matter of Greek *vocabulary*.)

Cooper follows up this failed attack on the BDAG lexicon by **appealing to other lexicons**. He insists that

*I realized early on in my study of Greek that it is immensely helpful to consult more than one reference work when trying to sort out a difficulty with the meaning of a Greek word. This is why I have several Greek reference works on my shelves (one has 3 volumes and another has 10 volumes, while Bauer is a single volume); and I have ready access to at least three more on my computer. If Tors had consulted a few more reference works (he only consults Bauer and Wallace-whom he rejects), he would have seen that Wallace is right on the money, and the problem would have instantly dissolved.*[28]

**Of course, this is significant only if Cooper can adduce other lexicons that list “sown seed” as an attested meaning for σπέρμα - and he cannot.** Oh, he certainly tries, appealing to Kittel, Verbrugge, “Brown’s 3-volume Dictionary of New Testament Theology,” and Liddell & Scott and claims that he “**immediately found distinctions that Bauer failed to make.**”[29] He provides fascinating information - which every student of NT Greek already knows - viz., that “‘seed’ (*sperma*) is from the group of Greek words that include ‘sown’ (*speiro*, which is used in verse 31 and again in 32), ‘sowing’ (*spora*), ‘sowing, seed’ (*sporos*) and ‘sown’ (*sporimos*). These are all of the cognates of ‘seed’ (*sperma*).”[30] **What he does not provide is an entry from any one of the lexicons that lists “agricultural seed” as an attested meaning for σπέρμα.** So his bald assertion that “**THE PRIMARY MEANING (not just a possible meaning) of ‘seed’ (*sperma*) is ‘SEED USED IN AGRICULTURE’** (or as Wallace put it: ‘sown seed’)”[31] is nothing but wishful thinking. **If it were as he says, at least one lexicon should explicitly list it.**

Interestingly, **the first thing Kittel says about the σπέρμα cognate group is “*spérma*. From the time of Homer this word means ‘seed,’ whether of plants or animals.**”[32] That clearly makes the word a very general term for all seeds, and

not only agricultural seeds. Cooper seems to have missed this important fact.

What is more questionable is Cooper's appeal to Liddell & Scott, wherein he says,

*the very first definition given for this word 'seed' (sperma) and therefore the most common sense of the word is: 'that which is sown.'*[\[33\]](#)

One would dearly like to know why Cooper did not continue the quote. Here it is in more complete form: "that which is sown, seed, **the seed or germ of anything.**"[\[34\]](#) It is clear from this fuller quotation that it is impossible to claim that Liddell & Scott offer any support to the idea that σπέρμα can be translated as "agricultural seed." And we have already seen what Wallace *really* says about this matter.

So what about Cooper's claim that he "immediately found distinctions that Bauer failed to make"?[\[35\]](#) He may have found such distinctions, but **he certainly has not shown any distinctions that would make "agricultural seed" an attested meaning of σπέρμα.**

We have now passed through the crucial part of Cooper's argument, and it has failed. My argument that the solution is found in translating γῆ as a "limited area of ground for agricultural use" remains viable inasmuch as "limited area of ground for agricultural use" is an attested meaning for the Greek word γῆ. As we have already said, **for Cooper's solution even to be viable (let alone preferable to mine), he had to show that "agricultural seed" is an attested meaning for the Greek word σπέρμα.** Despite his best efforts and appeals to various lexicons, he has failed to do that. What he has done is help make it clear that "**agricultural seed**" is *not* an attested meaning for the Greek word σπέρμα.

In spite of this, Cooper boldly asserts that

*Sperma is part of a group of words that are all have [sic] a meaning related to sowing seed for agricultural purposes. This is conclusive evidence that the word sperma originally referred only to seed that was to be sown for the purpose of agriculture.*[\[36\]](#)

**Based on the evidence we have seen, this statement cannot be seen as**



**anything other than wildly wrong**. It is exceedingly difficult to understand how Cooper can still maintain that:

**The word *sperma* originally referred only to seed that was to be sown for the purpose of agriculture.** It is possible for the meaning of words to change over time and occasionally take on a completely different meaning, particularly among certain groups of people. This is why **Greek references (such as Kittel)** that explore the range of meaning for a word not only offer etymologies but also **give brief studies of how the word was used in particular eras** and by certain groups (e.g., classical Greek, the Septuagint, the New Testament). But **I could find no indication that *sperma* took on any different meaning** (except when used figuratively of human descendants, which does not affect our discussion here).[\[37\]](#)

He actually mentions Kittel while saying he could find “**no indication that *sperma* took on any different meaning from ‘seed that was to be sown for the purpose of agriculture.’**”[\[38\]](#) This is the Kittel who, we recall, tells us that

*From the time of Homer this word means ‘seed,’ whether of plants or animals.*[\[39\]](#)

Cooper has unfortunately overlooked this “**indication.**”

Now, this is a propitious place to explain a key point. Cooper repeatedly states that

*Certainly, in the New Testament, whenever *sperma* is used in reference to the seeds of plants, it refers to seed that is being sown for agriculture.*[\[40\]](#)

This is true, and it is not surprising. At the time the New Testament was written, most people lived by subsistence farming, and their very lives depended on doing it successfully. They did not have easy and ready access to all sorts of food as we do, nor did they have much time or resources for luxuries. Growing crops was the central focus of their labour, so it is not puzzling that the New Testament always speaks of seeds in this context.

**But that does not mean that the Jews in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD did not know of**

**other seeds.** Flowers were cultivated for aesthetic reasons in the Middle East for centuries prior to that time, and Romans in particular engaged in this practice widely:

*A whole range of flowers and plants were popular in Roman gardens ...  
Favourite flowers include roses, narcissi, oleanders, violets, crocus, narcissus,  
lily, gladioli, iris, poppy, amaranth and wildflowers in general.*[\[41\]](#)

Flowers are mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments. **It is inconceivable that the 1<sup>st</sup>-century Jews did not know of flower seeds, or that σπέρμα did not include such seeds;** indeed, we know from Liddell & Scott that it did.

The fact that the NT references to σπέρμα are about agricultural seeds does not negate this fact. Obviously agricultural seeds were of primary and overwhelming interest to the 1<sup>st</sup>-century Jews, but that does not mean that “**agricultural seed**” is an attested meaning of the generic word σπέρμα. By way of analogy, in a book about basketball, every ball mentioned will be a basketball, but that does not mean that “basketball” is an attested meaning of “ball.” It isn’t; a basketball is a *type* of ball, just as “**agricultural seed**” is a *type* of σπέρμα.

Cooper then makes an argument that he thinks supports his view, but a close examination shows that it is actually a powerful argument for *our* view! He asserts that

*the context here is agriculture. And context is THE most important issue in interpretation of language. We can see that this parable is about agriculture in the immediate context (in the phrase that the NIV totally leaves out): “sown (speiro) upon the soil.” We can also see this context in the very next verse: “Yet when planted (speiro, same word as in 4:31), it grows and becomes THE LARGEST OF ALL \*GARDEN PLANTS\* (λαχάνων = lachanon), with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade” (NIV). Fortunately, the NIV gets this verse right.*[\[42\]](#)

Cooper has thus strongly underscored *my* point. Greek has a word that means “plant” in general: **φυτεία** (*phuteia*; it appears in e.g. Matthew 15:13).[\[43\]](#) The word **λάχανον** (*lachanon*), on the other hand, as Cooper points out, means “edible garden herb, vegetable.”[\[44\]](#) This raises an obvious question; if Cooper is

correct, **why didn't Mark 14:32 use φυτεία instead of λάχανον? Why was it necessary to specify that garden herbs were in view here?** By Cooper's logic, the context of the parable should have already told us that (as he claims it does with σπέρμα), so why not just use φυτεία? Because **φυτεία is a generic term that would have meant a comparison with all plants**, not just agricultural plants, just as **σπέρμα is a generic term meaning a comparison with all seeds**, not just agricultural seeds.

We come to Cooper's final argument and find him demolishing his own case. He argues that

*When the mustard seed (kokkos) is sown (speiro) upon the soil (ges) ... So what word would be used if the ancients wanted to refer to just any seed (whether wild or domesticated)? As we already noted, there is the word kokkos. So Jesus' shift from kokkos to sperma only reinforces the fact that it is the smallest of agricultural seeds sperma and that it is NOT being compared to all seeds, including wild seeds (kokkos).[\[45\]](#)*

**This idea is not just wrong; it is backwards.** Cooper has been arguing stridently that *sperma* is agricultural seed because it is the seed that is sown; indeed, he says, "sown" is inherent in the definition. Sown seed is *sperma*, and so that is agricultural seed; so says Cooper. And yet in this very parable, Jesus says, "A mustard ***kokkos*** which, when it is **sown** on the ground, is smaller than all the ***sperma*** on earth"! **How did Cooper overlook the fact that this very parable utterly destroys his contention that *sperma* is the sown seed and *kokkos* is the wild seed, inasmuch as the *kokkos* is the one that is sown?**

**The significance of this should be clear.** The mustard seed in Mark 4:31 is called a κόκκος and that is the "agricultural seed" in the parable, so it not clear why anyone would think that κόκκος is the general term for "all seeds, including wild seeds." If we could draw any conclusion at all from this, it would be **that if agricultural seeds alone were in view, it is κόκκος that would be used, not σπέρμα - the exact opposite of what Cooper contends.**

This, in turn, would indicate that had the comparison of seed sizes in the parable been restricted to only agricultural seeds, the text would have read, "It is like a mustard κόκκος which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the κόκκος on earth" - which, again, is the exact opposite of what Cooper suggests.

## Conclusion

Our solution to the putative (and oft-mentioned by skeptics) problem that Jesus supposedly was mistaken in saying that the mustard seed “is smaller than all the seeds on earth” (Mark 4:31) is viable. As we showed in our previous article, “limited area of ground for agricultural use” is an attested meaning for the word γῆ, so that even technically Jesus did not make a mistake here.

Cooper has suggested another solution, viz., that “seeds” (σπέρμα) in the clause “is smaller than all the seeds on earth” should be understood as only “**agricultural seeds.**” As we pointed out, for this solution to be viable, Cooper **must show that “agricultural seed” is an attested meaning for the word σπέρμα**, or else Jesus would least technically have been in error.

Cooper’s case was rather problematic, from his failure to understand what BDAG actually said to his failure to understand Wallace’s position to his failure to find “**agricultural seed**” as an attested meaning in any Greek lexicon to his strange suggestion that κόκκος (“grain”) should be taken as the generic word for “seed” instead of σπέρμα, which is the actual generic word for “seed.” **The bottom line, though, is that Cooper failed to show that “agricultural seed” is an attested meaning for the word σπέρμα (in fact, the evidence we surveyed strongly indicates the opposite), and without that his case collapses and must be rejected.**

**Again, this is not trivial.** As we pointed out, Jesus Himself said to Nicodemus,

*“If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?” (John 3:12)*

That would indicate that He would have been careful to be fully trustworthy on “earthly” things; otherwise, if one cannot trust Him on earthly things (including such a simple matter as seed size), why indeed would they trust Him about “heavenly things”? **Cooper’s case fails to absolve Him of error. However, it is clear from our solution in our earlier paper that Jesus made no error at all.** It is difficult to imagine that anyone would prefer a “solution” according to which Jesus is technically in error to one in which He is not, yet it seems that some do. It is passing strange.

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## Endnotes

[1] Tors, John. "Did Jesus Err about the Size of Mustard Seeds? A Case Study in How to Do Serious Evangelical Apologetics" at <https://truthinmydays.com/did-jesus-err-about-the-size-of-mustard-seeds-a-case-study-in-how-to-do-serious-evangelical-apologetics/>

[2] Bauer, Walter, W.F. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich, and F.W. Danker. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Third Edition (BDAG). Revised and edited by Frederick William Danker. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000, p. 937. BDAG is the industry-standard Greek lexicon.

[3] Cooper, Brad. "THE SMALLEST SEED IN MARK 4:31 ~ Examining a Difficult Bible Verse." Posted on January 1, 2016, at <http://2besure.blogspot.ca/2016/01/is-mustard-seed-smallest-in-whole-earth.html>.

[4] Cooper, *op. cit.*

[5] *ibid.*

[6] *ibid.*

[7] *ibid.* Cooper is referring to the idea as expressed by MacArthur and Wallace (Tors, "Did Jesus Err about the Size of Mustard Seeds?" *op. cit.*)

[8] Cooper, *op. cit.* (Bolding added.)

[9] BDAG, p. 196. (Bolding added.) To make sure there is no misunderstanding, I will point out that "w. ref." stands for "with reference".

[10] Tors, "Did Jesus Err about the Size of Mustard Seeds?" *op. cit.*

[11] Cooper, *op. cit.*

[12] *ibid.*

[13] *ibid.*

[14] *ibid.*

[15] *ibid.*

[16] Wallace, Daniel B. *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996, p. 301. (Bolding and underlining added.)

[17] Tors, “Did Jesus Err about the Size of Mustard Seeds?” *op. cit.*

[18] Wallace, *op. cit.*

[19] Wallace (*ibid.*) actually avers that “Grammar does not solve this problem, of course, but it does lean in one direction (*viz.*, comparative for superlative),” though he already told us that “a comparative adj. followed by a gen. should be taken in a comparative way; in both cases the comparison is between more than two items and hence functions as a superlative.”

[20] Cooper, *op. cit.*

[21] BDAG, *op. cit.*, pp. v-vii

[22] Cooper, *op. cit.*

[23] And Danker and Arndt and Gingrich.

[24] He has not identified a first weakness, other than, of course, not including “sown seed” as an attested meaning of σπέρμα – which is, of course, no weakness at all.

[25] See D.A. Carson’s *Exegetical Fallacies*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), especially Chapter 1: Word-Study Fallacies.

[26] Cooper, *op. cit.*

[27] Wallace, *op. cit.*

[28] Cooper, *op. cit.* The final sentence is, of course, quite ironic.

[29] *ibid.*

[30] *ibid.*

[31] *ibid.* (Bolding and block capitals his.)

[32] Kittel, Gerhard and Gerhard Friedrich. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Transl. Geoffrey W. Bromily. Abridged in one volume by Geoffrey W. Bromily. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985, p. 1065. (Bolding and underlining added.)

[33] Cooper, *op. cit.* (Bolding his.)

[34] Liddell, Henry George and Robert Scott. *Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*. Abridged. Simon Wallenberg Press, 2007, p. 645. (Bolding and underlining added.)

[35] Cooper, *op. cit.*

[36] *ibid.* (Bolding added.)

[37] Cooper, *op. cit.*

[38] *ibid.*

[39] Kittel, Gerhard and Gerhard Friedrich. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Transl. Geoffrey W. Bromily. Abridged in one volume by Geoffrey W. Bromily. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985, p. 1065. (Bolding and underlining added.)

[40] Cooper, *op. cit.*

[41] Sheldon, Natasha. "Ancient Roman Gardens." Posted at <http://www.ancienthistoryarchaeology.com/ancient-roman-gardens>. Her sources include "Radice, Betty (trans) *The Letters of Pliny the Younger* (Book 5, 6). Penguin Books; Wilkinson, Paul, *Pompeii: The Last Day*. BBC books."

[42] Cooper, *op. cit.* (Bolding, underlining, and blue colour his.)

[43] BDAG, *op. cit.*, p. 1070

[44] *ibid.*, p. 587

[45] Cooper, *op. cit.* (Bolding his.)

[46] BDAG, *op. cit.*, p. 554

[47] Cooper, *op. cit.*

[48] Wheat, barley, and pulse legumes (including broadbeans, lentils, chickpeas, and garden peas), according to Nigel Hepper. *Illustrated Encyclopedia of Bible Plants*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992, pp. 82-83, 126. Cited at <http://www.uhl.ac/files/2413/4364/7236/Agriculture.pdf>.