

# DINOSAURS AND THE BIBLE

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## **DINOSAURS AND THE BIBLE**

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# CONTENTS

Introduction. . . . .	7
1. When and Where Dinosaurs Lived. . . . .	9
The Creation of Dinosaurs . . . . .	9
Other Extinct Reptiles. . . . .	12
Dinosaurs in the Fall and the Flood. . . . .	14
Dinosaurs Through the Ice Age. . . . .	16
Dinosaur Extinction . . . . .	19
2. Dinosaur Fossils . . . . .	21
How to Examine Evidence . . . . .	21
Fossil Graveyards. . . . .	23
Going on a Dinosaur Dig . . . . .	25
Dinosaur Tracks . . . . .	28
Dinosaur Design . . . . .	31
Variation in a Dinosaur Kind . . . . .	33
Fossil “Feathers” . . . . .	36
Original Tissue Fossils. . . . .	37
3. Dinosaurs in the Bible . . . . .	43
What Was Behemoth? . . . . .	43
What Was Leviathan? . . . . .	48
What Was <i>Nachash Saraph</i> ? . . . . .	49
What Was <i>Ketos</i> ? . . . . .	56
4. Two Questions About Dinosaurs and the Bible . . . . .	61
Two Lines of Evidence. . . . .	61
Question 1: Do Billions of Years Fit with Genesis? . . . . .	63
“Days” in Genesis 1. . . . .	64

Squeezing the “Age of Dinosaurs” Between Verses . .	64
Creation by Evolution? . . . . .	65
Question 2: How Could Most Scientists Be Wrong? . . . . .	66
How Secularism Works . . . . .	67
Dating Dinosaur Fossils . . . . .	68
What About Radioisotope “Clocks”? . . . . .	72
A Spiritual Cause and Cure . . . . .	75

## INTRODUCTION

When I first saw a dinosaur fossil as a small child, I was shocked by the enormous, tooth-filled skull that greeted me at the museum entrance. But very soon I was hooked. As the terror subsided, basic questions filled my mind. Where did dinosaurs come from? Where did they go? How long ago did they live? How did the Earth preserve their skeletons?

Over the years, teachers, museum guides, books, magazines, movies, and TV news reports provided the same general answers. Where did dinosaurs come from? I was told that they evolved long ago and lived on Earth for millions of years. Where did they go? Something happened 65 million years ago that wiped them out—perhaps mammals ate all their eggs, or maybe it was a violent impact from outer space. Supposedly, their bodies were fossilized over eons as minerals replaced the original bone material. For a long time, I saw no reason to doubt these answers.

That all changed with one conversation.

When I was a science major in college, a nonscience friend asked me a question I had never heard before: Is it true that a dinosaur fossil is dated by the age assignment given to the rock layer it's found in, but that this same rock layer is dated according to the million-year age assignments of the unique fossils it contains? Had I encountered this use of circular reasoning in my science studies? Could I show that dinosaur age assignments rest more on field data and less on assumptions or fallacies?

For months, I had no desire to tackle the issue. In retrospect, I

probably dreaded questioning one of my own fundamental beliefs. At the time, I did not understand that my answers to questions about dinosaurs reflected my beliefs about the history of the world in general.

I dodged my friend's repeated challenge until we finally brokered a deal. He would stop bothering me if I would read his book on creation. It presented information that first challenged and then eroded my faith in evolution and its long ages. In studying creation materials, I found real evidence that the Bible, not the words of fallible humans, conveys truthful world history. My hope is that this book may have a similar impact on its readers as they see the evidence that God's Word is accurate and true in all things.

Where did dinosaurs come from and how long ago did they live? My answers to these questions have totally changed. Maybe yours will, too.

# 1

## WHEN AND WHERE DINOSAURS LIVED

**D**inosaurs once roamed the earth in an amazing variety of shapes and sizes. We know from their fossil remains that a few of them were huge, the largest land creatures that ever lived. Some of them were undoubtedly terrible and monstrous. We also know that many dinosaurs were only the size of a turkey when full-grown.

Almost no one these days can escape being told that dinosaurs lived in an Age of Reptiles that ended 65 million years ago. These teachings, repeated now for generations, have no real merit; they are bereft of science or history to substantiate them. One purpose of this booklet is to open a window on the evidence found in abundant scientific and historical sources of dinosaur data. We will see that the details fit well with a straightforward reading of Scripture.

### *The Creation of Dinosaurs*

According to Genesis, God created man and animals, plants to sustain their bodies, the Earth for them to live upon, and the universe as their setting. He did this in the span of six days. For Him to have created all things in just the way Genesis 1 describes would have been no problem for an all-knowing, all-powerful, personal God.

Did God directly create dinosaurs? Adding information from the New Testament to what is recorded in Genesis, it is evident that each

member of the Trinity was involved in the creation of the universe and its inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> We infer that the Father conceived of the creation, the Son spoke the Father's will in the form of "let there be" commands, and the Spirit powerfully effected those commands. If this is true, then it follows that God the Father invented each dinosaur kind, Jesus commanded each to materialize, and the Spirit energized those commands to make dinosaurs real in body and soul.<sup>2</sup>

Through these means, God created the creatures that today we call dinosaurs on the final day of His creative activity. He made plants on Day Three, stars on Day Four, then air and sea creatures on Day Five. It was on Day Six that God made the creatures that live on land, whether creeping or walking, large or small.

What exactly was a dinosaur? First, they were reptiles. Unfortunately, unlike birds, which all have feathers, and mammals, which all have hair,<sup>3</sup> reptiles have no single trait that is totally unique by which we can easily identify them. We can say that they have scaly skin, but so do bird feet. We can say they lay eggs, but some do not, and birds as well as some mammals also lay eggs. So the best we can do is rule out other classes of vertebrates to discern whether a creature is reptilian.

Dinosaurs did have scaly skin. Their scales were not like fish scales, which are like tiny plates that grow out of and can be scraped off the skin. Reptile scales are thickened folds or bumps of skin. Some fossils preserve the impression of dinosaur skin and show detailed rosette patterns that the scaly skin displayed.



Some dinosaurs laid eggs. Maybe they all did, but we don't know for sure, since it is difficult to link a fossil dinosaur egg to the species that laid

George Sternberg discovered a duck-billed dinosaur mummy in 1908 in Montana's Hell Creek Formation. In 1912 Henry Osborn photographed and described its skin, which clearly shows scales, or thickened bumps of skin, just like that which appears on many living reptiles.

## When and Where Dinosaurs Lived

it. Dinosaurs had other reptile-like features, such as certain holes in their skulls. Taken together, the fossil evidence clearly places dinosaurs among the many different forms that fall under the reptilian category. But dinosaurs had an important difference from modern reptiles.

The legs of modern reptiles—like turtles, lizards, and alligators—stick out from the body, then angle down to the ground. Their feet are seldom situated directly below their bodies, but instead are placed out to the side. In contrast, dinosaur reptiles had legs oriented nearly straight to the ground from the hips. The two-legged dinosaurs would have walked somewhat upright, more like humans. Our legs also extend straight down from hips to the ground. The two-legged dinosaurs called theropods are thought to have been meat-eaters and had hips that in some ways resemble those of modern lizards. *Tyrannosaurus rex* was a theropod. Other two-legged dinosaurs called ornithopods had bird-like hip structures and often ate plants. Duck-billed dinosaurs called hadrosaurs were ornithopods. Even the four-legged dinosaurs' legs descended from the body directly to the ground.

Dinosaurs walked on land and were therefore created on Day Six. The key verse on this point is Genesis 1:25: “And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.” Dinosaurs certainly qualified as “beast[s] of the earth.”

The passage also says that God made each animal “according to its kind,” which means that the very first animals were created in discrete forms. And because the Lord brought representative animal “kinds” to Noah (Genesis 6:19-20), and not just two animals that might have evolved into all other creatures, we can infer that the different kinds did not and do not interbreed. Living animals show the same fidelity to their kinds that we expect based on these words in Genesis. For example, cats always breed cats, whether tiger, mountain lion, or tigon varieties, and horses always breed horses, whether Clydesdale, mule, zebra, or zorse varieties.

It is important to note also in Genesis 1:25 that God made all the animals “good.” When Adam named the animals (Genesis 2:19), he evidently named the dinosaurs, too. When he examined the *Deinonychus*

dinosaur kind, with its terrible teeth and talons, would Adam have agreed that such a creature was “good”? Why not? Animals such as bears use their teeth and claws to eat berries and roots. Sharp teeth and claws are not inherently evil or necessarily designed for any originally evil purpose. But a creature with malicious behavior could use them to harm other animals or even humans. That’s when teeth become fearsome.

Before sin entered the world, there was no death or predatory behaviors. Back then, dinosaurs were indeed good. According to Genesis 1:30, God provided plant material for all the animals to eat. Thus, in the beginning, dinosaurs that had large, sharp teeth used them to eat plants.<sup>4</sup> Maybe they enjoyed eating gigantic fruits that are today extinct. Other interesting reptiles lived among dinosaurs, as is known from their fossilized bones found mixed together in the same sedimentary rock layers. God must have made all of these during the creation week. Sometime since then, these creatures went extinct, as far as is known.

### *Other Extinct Reptiles*

God created flying creatures on Day Five, including flying reptiles. The Hebrew word often translated into the English word “birds” included more than just birds. God created the flying mammals, which are mostly bats, on Day Five as well. Like bats, flying reptiles possessed thin skin membranes stretched between elongated finger-like bones as wings. Their fossils are known as pterosaurs, but there is plenty of evidence throughout ancient history that people living near them called them various names, including “dragon.” Fossils of pterosaurs and dinosaurs sometimes occur in the same rock layer, along with an array of very familiar sea creatures and swamp-dwelling animals and plants.

Interpretations of pterosaur fossils have changed over time. Many years ago, secular scientists suggested that pterosaurs probably could not fly. They thought that pterosaur anatomy was too clumsy for flight and conjectured that maybe they could only glide. But recent studies using both physical and computer models revealed that pterosaurs had all the necessary biological equipment to have been adept flyers. Scientists studying fossil tracks in southern France even worked out the ways that pterosaurs adroitly folded their wings and hopped onto their elbows when landing.<sup>5</sup> Pterosaurs had tiny pteroid bones, one at the front

of each wing. When extended, the bone held aloft a small flap. Like a bird's alula feather, this was critical to maintaining flight at low airspeeds. Without it, pterosaurs would have crash-landed. God did not forget the tiniest design detail.

The discovery of fully functional flight features like the retractable pteroid bone and foldable wing construction must disappoint secularists, since they have been searching for fossils to place onto an imaginary evolutionary path toward pterosaur flight. However, biblical creationists, who believe the Bible means exactly what it says when it describes how God created each winged creature “according to its kind,” expected to find fully equipped flyers in the fossils (Genesis 1:21).

In addition to birds, bats, and flying reptiles, God also created all the creatures of the sea on Day Five. Genesis 1:21 calls special attention to the *tanniym*. Though some translators chose to render this word as “whales,” the term includes more than that. English Bible translators who did their work hundreds of years ago may have been familiar with then-living dragons, because they sometimes translated *tanniym* as “dragon,” “sea monster,” or “serpent.” Whether flying or swimming, the words “serpent” and “dragon,” like the word “reptile,” apply to a broad range of creatures. We will investigate more such Bible words in chapter 3.

Large and small extinct marine reptiles are well-represented as fossils in certain sedimentary rock layers. One extinct marine reptile kind called mosasaur grew almost 50 feet long. Their fossils have been found on every continent, including Australia and Antarctica. Another large marine reptile known from fossils is the plesiosaur, which sometimes grew to more than 50 feet in length. Mosasaurs featured very long tails, while plesiosaurs featured very long necks. Perhaps no creatures were better qualified to be *tanniym* than these.

So far, we have seen clear scriptural implications that God created all the marine and flying reptiles on Day Five, and that He created all land reptiles, including dinosaurs, on Day Six. Fossils confirm this by showing that each creature kind, though it expressed some variations in body form, appears perfectly complete in the fossil record if it appears at all. Not one fossil exists as an *undisputed* evolutionary transition from one basic type to another. In other words, for every fossil that one

evolutionary scientist suggests was evolving, another evolutionary scientist disagrees.<sup>6</sup> Observational science agrees with the assertion that God made completed creatures.

### ***Dinosaurs in the Fall and the Flood***

In the beginning, dinosaurs were all “very good” (Genesis 1:31). There was no violence, so none of them had killed any other creature. This state of goodness did not last long. Soon after creation, the first two humans rebelled and disobeyed God. This rebellion is what the Bible calls sin. Being holy, God meted out the wages of their sin. In Genesis 3, the Lord cursed the serpent, the woman, the ground, and Adam. At that moment, the process of dying began that the Lord had promised as the consequence for eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, saying, “In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17). In His grace, the Lord prepared some “tunics of skin” for Adam and the woman, soon to be named Eve, showing that the first animal death was a sacrifice to cover the nakedness exposed by sin (Genesis 3:21).

Did animals begin killing other animals immediately after the Curse? The Bible doesn't say. But by the time a millennium and a half had passed, animal killings must have been common. The years leading up to the worldwide Flood judgment were no doubt fraught with animal violence. Genesis 6:11-12 says, “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.” “All flesh” included dinosaur flesh, meaning that by this time even dinosaurs had been corrupted.

The only remedy was their destruction. “God said to Noah, ‘The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth’” (Genesis 6:13). By this time, the land-dwelling bird, mammal, and reptile kinds had somehow been spoiled—morphed into monsters that, although they retained their essential created forms, became ruined castoffs from their well-behaved original ancestors.

But the Lord did bring some dinosaurs to Noah, presumably to a staging ground from which Noah and his family brought them into the Ark at just the right time. The text is clear and repetitive, at one point

stating, “They and every beast after its kind, all cattle after their kind, every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind, every bird of every sort. And they went into the ark to Noah, two by two, of all flesh in which is the breath of life” (Genesis 7:14-15).

This means that dinosaurs were on Noah’s Ark. This is a laughable suggestion to those who have not studied how feasible it really was, but the dinosaurs could readily have been accommodated on board. Following are basic answers to some common “dinosaurs on the Ark” questions.

**Q How could Noah have squeezed the hundreds of different dinosaur species into the Ark along with all those other animals?**

**A** Noah’s family did not bring each “species,” but two of each “kind.” Paleontologists make careers out of inventing species names, but there were really only about 60 different basic dinosaur kinds. So 120 dinosaurs averaging the size of a sheep would have occupied a small corner of the vast vessel.

**Q How could Noah have fit enough food on board to feed all those voracious dinosaurs for a whole year?**

**A** Noah could have fed the dinosaurs Genesis 1 vegetarian diets. He may even have known which plant products they preferred before the Fall, since Noah’s father, Lamech, could have talked with Adam about it. Also, reptiles are famous for fasting from food. Dinosaurs probably ate less than the mammals or birds on board.

**Q How could Noah have handled and husbanded such terrible toothy tyrants?**

**A** It wasn’t until after the Flood that God endowed animals, including dinosaurs, with a fear of man (Genesis 9:2). Perhaps this made their management much easier during the Flood. If not, we can be sure that Noah’s family was at least as clever as modern humans who have successfully corralled virtually every land creature at one time or another.

**Q How would the large dinosaurs like *Diplodocus* have fit onto the Ark's decks?**

**A** The largest dinosaur egg is about the size of a football, so even the big-bodied behemoths began small. God would most likely have selected sauropod juveniles to put on the Ark.

What happened to the dinosaurs not on the Ark? They drowned in the Flood or were suffocated by mud, along with the other land-dwelling, air-breathing creatures. During that year, successive super-tsunamis sent sandy slurries sliding across land surfaces, swallowing everything in their paths. This, not impacts from outer space, is the origin of the vast majority of dinosaur extinction recorded in the fossil record.

The next chapter provides fossil clues that clearly fit the Bible's account of a worldwide catastrophic dinosaur demise by fast-flowing, water-borne sediment. Some fossil clues even suggest that dinosaurs were among the last land creatures to survive outside the Ark. Meanwhile, it must have been a miserable year for those on board the Ark. But they survived the ordeal, and after the Earth began greening again, Noah and his family eventually released the animals, including dinosaurs and pterosaurs, into the new post-Flood world. What happened to the creatures after that?

***Dinosaurs Through the Ice Age***

Because God commanded His creatures to multiply and fill the earth, He must have created them with the necessary abilities to do so. Animals immediately and instinctively began this task after the Flood. When animals are presented with a new environment, they typically colonize it. For example, the 1980 Mount St. Helens volcano eruption ejected steam and mud blasts that devastated thousands of acres in Washington state. Evolutionary ecologists predicted the flora and fauna would need a century to recover. But after only 30 years the entire area was already richly filled with animals and trees. Younger visitors have to be told that the disaster happened fairly recently because growth covers much of the evidence. Elk quickly spread tree seeds through their droppings. When young forests regrew, opportunistic animals entered and rapidly multiplied. After their rapid population growth, animals' birth rates fell to sustainable numbers.

## When and Where Dinosaurs Lived

Similarly, the whole Earth was barren and desolate immediately after the Flood. But powerful plant and animal colonizers quickly transformed it into a habitable land surface. Of course, creatures need water to successfully and rapidly fill new environments. Abundant evidence from both science and Scripture shows that the Earth experienced an Ice Age soon after the Flood, and that meant abundant water along Earth's equatorial latitudes.

Terrible Ice Age storms dropped plenty of rain. Archaeologists recognize the signs showing that the Middle East, which is now largely desert, was once tropical.<sup>7</sup> For example, although the great Sphinx monument in Egypt suffered most of its damage from rainwater erosion, it rarely rains in that land today. Satellite images even reveal ancient waterways buried beneath sand dunes in the Sahara.<sup>8</sup> Ruined cities throughout the Middle East show that people thrived there when the land was more lush and productive.

Abraham lived near the end of the Ice Age, although this "age" ended gradually, not abruptly. Abraham and Lot looked out over the Jordan Valley that today holds the Dead Sea, and Lot noticed that it was "well watered everywhere" (Genesis 13:10). Today it is dry except where purposefully irrigated, and its sparse flora no longer resembles the Garden of God to which Lot compared it.

In lands farther away from the equator, regularly occurring post-Flood supersize snowstorms built sheets of ice several thousands of feet thick. These covered continent-size regions in northern latitudes. In later years, the ice melted and eventually carved new valleys and left behind piles of characteristic rocky debris and colossal scrape marks. All that melting ice made its way to the ocean, which is today about 350 feet higher than it was during the peak of the Ice Age. If we could turn back the clock, the lower sea levels would reveal much more habitable land areas, including land bridges connecting continents. Dinosaurs could have travelled to distant lands across ancient bridges that today lie submerged.

The first post-Flood dinosaurs found agreeable habitats in the then-lush and tropical Middle East. They soon migrated, perhaps from one water hole to another, some moving into Europe and others eastward to China. Ample evidence from petroglyphs and widespread legends

confirms that dinosaurs migrated to the Americas.<sup>9</sup> Native languages use an array of specific names for various land or water monsters the speakers' forebears must have encountered.<sup>10</sup> As ice retreated over the centuries, new habitats became available for the occasional dinosaur to colonize, along with many other creatures like woolly rhinoceros, pigs, deer, and large cats. The Bible records many droughts in the Holy Land and nearby countries. These probably represent the retreat of a lush Middle East climate. When that land dried, so did the dinosaur habitats.

The few dinosaurs that remained there were often hunted, as many dragon legends portray. St. George was reputed to have slain a dragon in the Middle East in the late AD 200s, and another legend holds that the prophet Daniel killed a dragon near Babylon centuries earlier. These two examples represent scores of historical accounts from around the world.

Some dinosaurs may have persisted long after the Ice Age. Chinese histories feature dragons alongside other real animals in the Chinese zodiac. Dragon legends, paintings, carvings, and even historical records abound in Europe. Several European place names still reflect the name of the dinosaur or pterosaur that once lived there, like Grindelwald in Switzerland, Worms and Drachenfels in Germany, Llyn-yr-Afanc (Afanc's pool) in Wales, and the Knucker Hole in England.

Historian Bill Cooper analyzed several ancient written accounts of dragon encounters. One, from England, was written in 1405:

Close to the town of Bures, near Sudbury, there has lately appeared, to the great hurt of the countryside, a dragon, vast in body, with a crested head, teeth like a saw, and a tail extending to an enormous length. Having slaughtered the shepherd of a flock, it devoured many sheep. In order to destroy him, all the country people around were summoned. But when the dragon saw that he was again to be assailed with arrows, he fled into a marsh or mere and there hid himself among the long reeds, and was no more seen.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Dinosaur Extinction***

If dinosaurs were really on the Ark and lived after the Flood, then why do they no longer exist? It was probably not an impact from outer space that killed the dinosaurs, as secularists conjecture. Like other animals, “dragons” of various forms began filling the earth immediately after the Flood, but people did not follow them at first. Instead of obeying God’s command to Noah and his family to multiply and fill the earth (Genesis 9:1), Noah’s great-grandchildren assembled themselves into the first recorded post-Flood city, Babel. So, while mankind was staying together, dinosaurs were pioneering afield, unimpeded by people.

But after God intervened by imposing different languages (Genesis 11:1-9), families began spreading across the earth. The two main reasons why animals go extinct today should likewise apply to dinosaur extinction—loss of habitat and human hunting. When humans settle an area, they remove the threats to their children’s safety. They both hunt the threatening animals directly and displace them by moving their fields and settlements into the animals’ habitats. Pioneering natives had hunted the giant moa bird to extinction on the islands of New Zealand by about AD 1500. Newspapers around the world announced in 2011 that a poacher killed the last Javan rhino living in Vietnam. Dinosaur extinction continued long after the Ice Age, as climate changes from rising seas, melting snows, and droughts likely contributed to the loss of suitable habitats.

For many centuries after the Flood, people encountered dragons all over the world. That must be how dragon legends arose in so many places. The last European dragons evidently died in the late Middle Ages. Dragons went extinct in China sometime after Marco Polo visited, since he recorded his medieval encounters with them. There are some eyewitness reports of dinosaurs still alive in extremely remote tropical swamps in the Congo and Indonesian Islands, but these await more research. Discovering a live dinosaur or pterosaur in some isolated place would not surprise someone who believes in biblical creation, but it would present a daunting challenge for evolutionists to explain how it could have survived when its relatives went extinct “65 million years ago.”

# Dinosaurs and the Bible

## Notes

1. One such reference in the New Testament is Colossians 1:13-16: "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him."
2. Dinosaur skulls show that they had nostrils, so according to Genesis 7:22, they had "soulish" life, translated as "the breath of the spirit of life."
3. Even dolphins have whiskers, which are lost soon after birth.
4. Since plants do not have the breath of life, when dinosaurs ate plant material death did not occur, but only a God-designed cycling of nutrients. For more information, see Morris, J. 1991. Are Plants Alive? *Acts & Facts*. 20 (9).
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6. Scores of these disputed fossils are helpfully compiled and fully documented in an appendix in Morris, J. and F. Sherwin. 2009. *The Fossil Record*. Dallas, TX: Institute for Creation Research.
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