

Dinosaurs

Is there a biblical explanation?



Second Edition

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Introduction

Dinosaurs have captured the imagination of people throughout history. Dinosaurs are mysterious creatures known primarily from the fossilized bones that we find. Scientists who study the fossils attempt to reconstruct these creatures that ranged from the size of a rat to the largest living animals to ever roam the planet. How they interpret the fossil evidence has led to much controversy.

Starting from the assumption that the earth is billions of years old, most scientists believe dinosaurs lived millions of years ago, dying out over 60 million years ago. Detailed explanations of how they hunted, ate, cared for their young, and changed through the millenia are offered. We must ask how accurate these interpretations are in light of the scant evidence that is available.

What does the Bible teach when it comes to dinosaurs? Though the Bible doesn't use the word *dinosaur*, the descriptions in Job and other books sound a lot like dinosaurs we know from the fossil deposits. The biblical view has dinosaurs—land animals—created on day six of creation week. This means that they would have lived at the same time as man, a notion contrary to the evolutionary explanation.

Is there evidence that dinosaurs lived alongside man? Are the birds feeding in your backyard really dinosaurs? What can we know from the fossil evidence? These questions and others will be answered from the perspective we gain from God's Word—the Bible.



What Really Happened to the Dinosaurs?

by Ken Ham

Dinosaurs are used more than almost anything else to indoctrinate children and adults in the idea of millions of years of earth history. However, the Bible gives us a framework for explaining dinosaurs in terms of thousands of years of history, including the mystery of when they lived and what happened to them. Two key texts are Genesis 1:24–25 and Job 40:15–24.

Are Dinosaurs a Mystery?

Many think that the existence of dinosaurs and their demise is shrouded in such mystery that we may never know the truth about where they came from, when they lived, and what happened to them. However, dinosaurs are only a mystery *if* you accept the evolutionary story of their history.

According to evolutionists:

Dinosaurs first evolved around 235 million years ago, long before man evolved.¹ No human being ever lived with dinosaurs. Their history is recorded in the fossil layers on earth, which were deposited over millions of years. They were so successful as a group of animals that they eventually ruled the earth. However, around 65 million years ago, something happened to change all of this—the dinosaurs disappeared. Most evolutionists believe some sort of cataclysmic event, such as an asteroid impact, killed them. But many evolutionists claim that some dinosaurs evolved into birds, and thus they are not extinct but are flying around us even today.²



There is no mystery surrounding dinosaurs if you accept the Bible's totally different account of dinosaur history.



According to the Bible:

On the basis of the Bible's history and what we observe in today's world, we can outline seven "ages" that apply to dinosaurs.



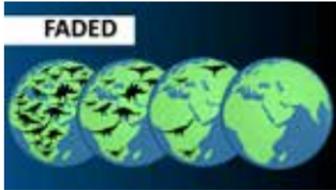
Dinosaurs first existed around 6,000 years ago.³ God formed the dinosaurs, along with the other land animals, on day six of creation week (Genesis 1:20–25, 31). Adam

and Eve were also made on day six—so dinosaurs lived at the same time as people, not separated by eons of time.

Like all other animals and man, dinosaurs originally ate only fruits and vegetables (Genesis 1:29–30). They did not start eating other animals until after the fall of man. Man and animals were not afraid of each other. This was the fearless age.

When Adam disobeyed his Creator, death, bloodshed, and suffering entered the world (Romans 5:12, 14; 1 Corinthians 15:21–22). At some point after this, dinosaurs and other animals began to eat each other. Everything was affected by the fall.

Representatives of all the kinds of air-breathing land animals, including the dinosaur kinds, went aboard Noah's ark. All those left outside the ark died in the cataclysmic



circumstances of the flood, and many of their remains became fossils.

After the flood around 4,300 years ago, the remnant of the land animals, including dinosaurs, came off the ark and lived in the present world, along with people. Because of sin, the judgments of the curse and the flood have greatly changed the earth. Post-flood climatic change, lack of food, disease, and man's activities caused many types of animals to become extinct. The dinosaurs, like many other creatures, died out, and man's memory of these great creatures faded.

Ancient people found bones from creatures that belonged to a group of land animals no longer alive on earth. In the 1800s, the term *dinosaur* was created for these creatures.

Today, man has invented all kinds of stories about dinosaurs: they ruled the earth over 60 million years ago; they died out when an asteroid struck the earth; they evolved into birds, etc. And today these fictional stories are taught as truth.

Why Such Different Views?

How can there be such totally different explanations for dinosaurs? Whether one is an evolutionist or accepts the Bible's account of history, the evidence for dinosaurs is *the same*. All scientists have the same facts—they have the

same world, the same fossils, the same living creatures, the same universe.

If the “facts” are the same, then how can the explanations be so different? The reason is that scientists have only the present—dinosaur fossils exist only in the present—but scientists are trying to connect the fossils in the present to the past. They ask, “What happened in history to bring dinosaurs into existence, wipe them out, and leave many of them fossilized?”⁴

The science that addresses such issues is known as *historical* or *origins science*, and it differs from the *operational science* that gives us computers, inexpensive food, space exploration, electricity, and the like. Origins science deals with the past, which is not accessible to direct experimentation, whereas operational science deals with how the world works in the here and now, which, of course, is open to repeatable experiments. Because of difficulties in reconstructing the past, those who study fossils (paleontologists) have diverse views on dinosaurs.⁵ As has been said, “Paleontology (the study of fossils) is much like politics: passions run high, and it’s easy to draw very different conclusions from the same set of facts.”⁶



A paleontologist who believes the record in the Bible, which claims to be the Word of God,⁷ will come to different conclusions than an atheist who rejects the Bible. Willful denial of God's Word (2 Peter 3:3-7) lies at the root of many disputes over historical science.

Many people think the Bible is just a book about religion or salvation. It is much more than this. The Bible is the history book of the universe and tells us the future destiny of the universe as well. It gives us an account of when time began, the main events of history, such as the entrance of sin and death into the world, the time when the *whole* surface of the globe was destroyed by water, the giving of different languages at the tower of Babel, the account of the Son of God coming as a man, his death and resurrection, and the new heavens and earth to come.

Ultimately, there are only two ways of thinking: starting with the revelation from God (the Bible) as foundational to *all* thinking (including biology, history, and geology), resulting in a *Christian worldview*; or starting with man's beliefs (for example, the evolutionary story) as foundational to all thinking, resulting in a *secular worldview*.

Most Christians have been indoctrinated through the media and education system to think in a secular way. They tend to take secular thinking to the Bible instead of using the Bible to *build* their thinking (Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 4:20-24).

The Bible says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7) and "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10).

If one begins with an evolutionary view of history (for which there were no witnesses or written record), then this way of thinking will be used to explain the evidence



that exists in the present. Thus, we have the evolutionary explanation for dinosaurs above.

But if one begins with the biblical view of history from the written record of an eyewitness (God) to all events of history, then a totally different way of thinking, based on this, will be used to explain the *same* evidence. Thus, we have the biblical explanation given above.

Dinosaur History

Fossil bones of dinosaurs are found around the world. Many of these finds consist of just fragments of bones, but some nearly complete skeletons have been found. Scientists have been able to describe many different types of dinosaurs based on distinctive characteristics, such as the structure of the skull and limbs.⁸

Where Did Dinosaurs Come From?

The Bible tells us that God created different kinds of land animals on day six of creation week (Genesis 1:24–25). Because dinosaurs were land animals, this must have included the dinosaur kinds.⁹

Evolutionists claim that dinosaurs evolved from some reptile that had originally evolved from amphibians. But they cannot point to any clear transitional (in-between) forms to substantiate their argument. Dinosaur family trees in evolutionary books show many distinct types of dinosaurs, but only hypothetical lines join them up to some common ancestor. The lines are dotted because there is *no* fossil evidence. Evolutionists simply cannot prove their belief in a nondinosaur ancestor for dinosaurs.

What Did Dinosaurs Look Like?

Scientists generally do not dig up a dinosaur with all its flesh intact. Even if they found *all* the bones, they still would have less than 40 percent of the animal to work out what it originally looked like. The bones do not tell the color of the animal, for example, although some fossils of skin impressions have been found, indicating the skin texture. As there is some diversity of color among reptiles living today, dinosaurs may have varied greatly in color, skin texture, and so on.

When reconstructing dinosaurs from bony remains, scientists make all kinds of guesses and often disagree. For example, debate has raged about whether dinosaurs were warm- or cold-blooded. It is even difficult to tell whether a dinosaur was male or female from its bones. There is much speculation about such things.

Sometimes scientists make mistakes in their reconstructions, which need correction when more bones are found. For instance, the famous *Brontosaurus* is not in newer dinosaur dictionaries. The original “discoverer” put the wrong head on a skeleton of a dinosaur that had already been named *Apatosaurus*.¹⁰

Who Discovered Dinosaurs?

Secular books would tell you that the first discovery of what later were called dinosaurs was in 1677 when Dr. Robert Plot found bones so big they were thought to belong to a giant elephant or a giant human.¹¹

In 1822, Mary Anne Mantell went for a walk along a country road in Sussex, England. According to tradition, she found a stone that glittered in the sunlight and showed it to her fossil-collecting husband. Dr. Mantell, a physician, noticed that the stone contained a tooth similar to, but much larger than, that of modern reptiles. He concluded that it belonged to some extinct giant plant-eating reptile with teeth like an iguana. In 1825 he named the owner of the tooth *Iguanodon* (iguana tooth). It was Dr. Mantell who began to popularize the “age of reptiles.”¹²

From a biblical perspective, however, the time of the above discoveries was actually the time when dinosaurs were *rediscovered*. Adam discovered dinosaurs when he first observed them.

When Did Dinosaurs Live?

Evolutionists claim dinosaurs lived millions of years ago. But it is important to realize that when they dig up a dinosaur bone it does not have a label attached showing its date. Evolutionists obtain their dates by *indirect* dating methods that other scientists question, and there is much evidence against the millions of years.¹³

Does God tell us when he made *Tyrannosaurus rex*? Many would say no. But the Bible states that God made all things in six normal days. He made the land animals, including dinosaurs, on day six (Genesis 1:24–25), so they date from around 6,000 years ago—the approximate date of creation obtained by adding up the years in the Bible.¹⁴ So, since

T. rex was a land animal and God made all the land animals on day six, then God made *T. rex* on day six.

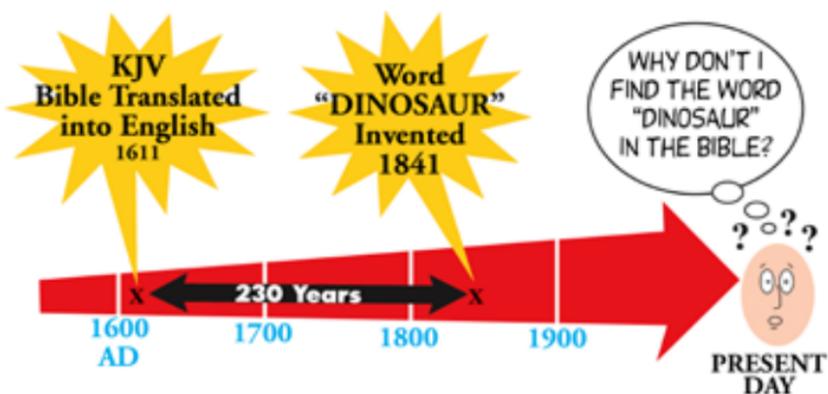
Furthermore, from the Bible we see that there was no death, bloodshed, disease, or suffering before sin.¹⁵ If one approaches Genesis to Revelation consistently, interpreting Scripture with Scripture, then death and bloodshed of man and animals came into the world only *after* Adam sinned. The first death of an animal occurred when God shed an animal's blood in the garden of Eden and clothed Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21). This was also a picture of the atonement—foreshadowing Christ's blood that was to be shed for us. Thus, there could not have been bones of dead animals before sin—this would undermine the gospel.

This means that the dinosaurs must have died after sin entered the world, not before. Dinosaur bones could not be millions of years old because Adam lived only thousands of years ago.

Does the Bible Mention Dinosaurs?

If people saw dinosaurs, you would think that ancient historical writings, such as the Bible, should mention them. The King James Version was first translated in 1611.¹⁶ Some people think that because the word “dinosaur” is not found in this or other translations, the Bible does not mention dinosaurs.

It was not until 1841, however, that the word *dinosaur* was invented.¹⁷ Sir Richard Owen, a famous British anatomist and first superintendent of the British Museum (and a staunch anti-Darwinist), on viewing the bones of *Iguanodon* and *Megalosaurus*, realized these represented a unique group of reptiles that had not yet been classified. He coined the term *dinosaur* from Greek words meaning “terrible lizard.”¹⁸



Thus, one would not expect to find the word *dinosaur* in the King James Bible—the word did not exist when the translation was done.

Is there another word for dinosaur? There are *dragon* legends from around the world. Many dragon descriptions fit the characteristics of specific dinosaurs. Could these actually be accounts of encounters with what we now call dinosaurs?

Just as flood legends are based on a real global flood (flood of Noah)—dragon legends are possibly based on actual encounters with real animals that today we call dinosaurs. Many of these land-dragon descriptions do fit with what we know about dinosaurs.

In Genesis 1:21, the Bible says, “So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds.” The Hebrew word here for “sea creatures” (“whales” in KJV) is the word translated elsewhere as “dragon” (Hebrew: *tannin*). So, in the first chapter of the first book of the Bible, God may be describing the great sea dragons (sea-dwelling, dinosaur-type animals) that he created.



There are other Bible passages about monsters and dragons that lived in the sea: “the sea monsters on the waters” (Psalm 74:13), “he will slay the dragon that is in the sea” (Isaiah 27:1). Though the word *dinosaur* strictly refers to animals that lived on the land, the sea reptiles and flying reptiles are often grouped with the dinosaurs. The sea dragons could have included dinosaur-type animals such as the *Mosasaurus*.¹⁹

Job 41 describes a great animal that lived in the sea, Leviathan, that even breathed fire. This “dragon” may have been something like the mighty 40-foot (12 m) *Sarcosuchus imperator* (super croc)²⁰ or the 82-foot (25 m) *Liopleurodon*.

There is also mention of a flying serpent in the Bible: the “flying fiery serpent” (Isaiah 30:6). This could be a reference to one of the pterodactyls, which are popularly thought of as flying dinosaurs, such as the *Pteranodon*, *Rhamphorhynchus*, or *Ornithocheirus*.²¹

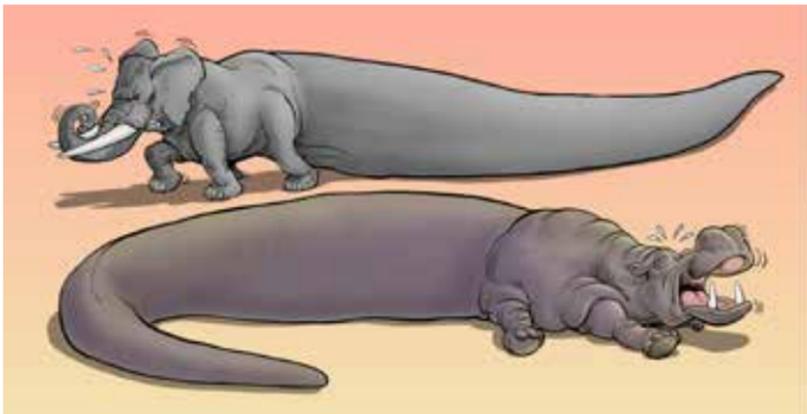
Not long after the flood, God was showing a man called Job how great he was as Creator by reminding Job of the largest land animal he had made:

Behold, Behemoth, which I made as I made you; he eats grass like an ox. Behold, his strength in his loins, and his power in the muscles of his belly. He makes his tail stiff like a cedar; the sinews of his thighs are knit together. His bones are tubes of bronze, his limbs like bars of iron. He is the first of the works of God; let him who made him bring near his sword! (Job 40:15-19)

The phrase “first of the works of God” suggests this was the largest land animal God had made. So what kind of animal was behemoth?

Bible translators, not being sure what this beast was, often transliterated the Hebrew as the word *behemoth* (e.g., KJV, NKJV, NASB, NIV, and ESV). However, in many Bible commentaries and Bible footnotes, behemoth is said to be “possibly the hippopotamus or elephant.”²² Some Bible versions actually translate *behemoth* this way.²³ Besides the fact that the elephant and hippo were not the largest land animals God made (some of the dinosaurs far eclipsed these), this description does not make sense since the tail of behemoth is compared to the large cedar tree (Job 40:17).

Now an elephant’s tiny tail (or a hippo’s tail that looks like a flap of skin) is quite unlike a cedar tree. Clearly, the elephant and the hippo could not possibly be “behemoth.”



No *living* creature comes close to this description. However, behemoth is very much like *Brachiosaurus*, one of the large dinosaurs.

Are There Other Ancient Records of Dinosaurs?

In the film *The Great Dinosaur Mystery*,²⁴ a number of dragon accounts are presented:

- A Sumerian story dating back to 2000 BC or earlier tells of a hero named Gilgamesh, who, when he went to fell cedars in a remote forest, encountered a huge, vicious dragon that he slew, cutting off its head as a trophy.
- When Alexander the Great (c. 330 BC) and his soldiers marched into India, they found that the Indians worshipped huge hissing reptiles that they kept in caves.
- China is renowned for its dragon stories, and dragons are prominent on Chinese pottery, embroidery, and carvings.
- England and several other cultures retain the story of St. George, who slew a dragon that lived in a cave.
- There is the story of a tenth-century Irishman who wrote of his encounter with what appears to have been a *Stegosaurus*.

In the 1500s, a European scientific book, *Historia Animalium*, listed several living animals that we would call dinosaurs. A well-known naturalist of the time, Ulysses Aldrovandus, recorded an encounter between a peasant named Baptista and a dragon whose description fits that of the small dinosaur *Tanystropheus*. The encounter was on May 13, 1572, near Bologna in Italy, and the peasant killed the dragon.

Petroglyphs (drawings carved on rock) of dinosaurlike creatures have also been found.²⁵

In summary, people down through the ages have been very familiar with dragons. The descriptions of these animals fit with what we know about dinosaurs. The Bible mentions such creatures, even ones that lived in the sea and flew in the air. There is a tremendous amount of other historical evidence that such creatures have lived beside people.

What Do the Bones Say?

There is also physical evidence that dinosaur bones are not millions of years old. Scientists from Montana State University found *T. rex* bones that were not totally fossilized. Sections of the bones were like fresh bone and contained what seems to be blood cells and hemoglobin. If these bones really were tens of millions of years old, then the blood cells and hemoglobin would have totally disintegrated.²⁶ Also, there should not be “fresh” bones if they were really millions of years old.²⁷ A report by these scientists stated the following:

A thin slice of *T. rex* bone glowed amber beneath the lens of my microscope The lab filled with murmurs of amazement, for I had focused on something inside the vessels that none of us had ever noticed before: tiny round objects, translucent red with a dark center Red blood cells? The shape and location suggested them, but blood cells are mostly water and couldn't possibly have stayed preserved in the 65-million-year-old *tyrannosaur* The bone sample that had us so excited came from a beautiful, nearly complete specimen of *Tyrannosaurus rex* unearthed in 1990 When the team brought the dinosaur into the lab, we noticed that some parts deep inside the long bone of the leg had not completely fossilized So far, we think that all of this evidence supports