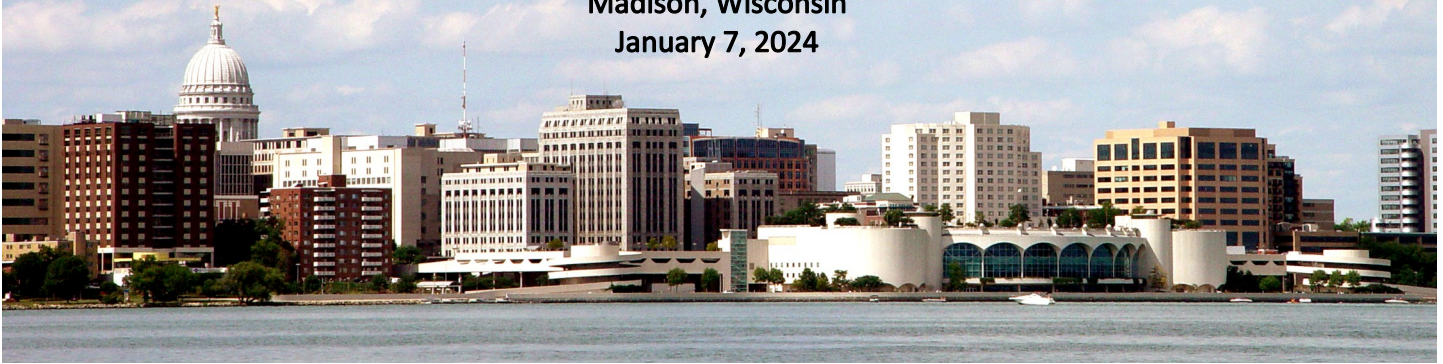


Dragons?

Part 1: Job 40-41

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Good morning, and welcome to the Four Lakes congregation! If you are visiting this morning or joining us online or on the phone, we are glad to have you with us. We'd like to ask that you fill out a visitor card online if you can, or you can use one of the cards from the pew in front of you. Whatever works for you, we would love to hear from you, and we invite you to pass along any questions or prayer concerns.

We are here this morning not only to worship together and to encourage each other, but we are also here to preach the good news that God loves us. He sent his only Son to this earth to save us. He died in our place, he was buried, but he was raised up on the third day, and this is the gospel. We obey the gospel by believing the message, by turning away from sin, by confessing our faith in Jesus as being the Son of God, and by allowing ourselves to be buried with him in baptism (an immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins). And to make sure we communicate God's plan as clearly as possible, we've been sharing examples of what it looks like to obey the gospel. And today, we have several, starting with a post from the St. Elmo congregation down in Chattanooga, Tennessee. They posted last Sunday, December 31, and they say that, "God's not done with 2023. London put Christ on in baptism tonight for the remission of her sins. Praise God." What a great way to end the year!

This next one also comes from last Lord's Day, from Kelly Sims, in Jasper, Alabama. Kelly says, "'I'm done waiting.' That's the text I received from my new brother, Jaxson, at 12:51 AM. What a motto for all of us to live by. I'm. Done. Waiting." So good to see it!

And this last one came in last Lord's Day as well, from the Camp Creek congregation down in Atlanta, Georgia. They say, "Praise God two souls have been saved and added to the body of Christ on the last day of the year! What a wonderful way to start the new year. Say Amen Hallelujah Glory Glory Church of Christ!!!" Again, good to see it! And we share these examples by way of encouragement, and this is our invitation to you to obey the gospel. If you have not yet done what these people have done, we invite you to get in touch. Pull me aside after worship this morning, or give me a call, send a text, or send an email using the contact information in our bulletin or on the website, and we would love to study together.

Nearly a year ago, one of the young people of this congregation asked for a lesson on DRAGONS. So, I'd like for us to look into that a little bit this morning (and next week as well), because dragons are, in fact, mentioned in

the Bible, several times (depending on which translation we're using). And as you might imagine, this subject has a way of getting pretty complicated in a hurry, because we look around us, and we don't seem to have any dragons around us these days. We do, though, have stories, and some of these have obviously been embellished through the years. And when we start digging into this, we quickly find quite the overlap between dragons and dinosaurs. So, as we try to honor this request, I'd like to combine our thoughts on dragons or dinosaurs (since there is so much overlap).

And as we work through this request, we won't be limiting ourselves primarily to one passage of scripture, so I'd like to structure our study around a series of questions: First of all, this morning we'll look at the question: Are dragons or dinosaurs described in the Bible? And then next week, we'll look at the question: Do we have any evidence that dragons or dinosaurs lived at the same time as people, and finally: What happened to these creatures? So, this is where we're headed over the next half hour or so, and continuing next week, if the Lord wills.

I. But let's start this morning by asking: ARE DRAGONS OR DINOSAURS ARE MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE?

First of all, in a round about way, yes. All living creatures were created by God within a period of six days, which is revealed to us in Genesis 1. We certainly don't have an exhaustive list of every creature ever made, but we do know that sea creatures and flying animals were made on Day #5 and land-dwelling creatures were made on Day #6. We don't have time to read the whole passage, but I'm putting it up here to make a few comments, and so also with a number of passages throughout today's lesson. I'll at least have a reference up here, and you should obviously feel free to write these down or take a pic of the screen and look these up on your own.

But I hope we notice that whales are not mentioned in this passage, but I know that whales were created on Day #5. How do I know this? Whales are sea creatures, sea creatures were made on Day #5, therefore whales were made on Day #5. So also, I don't read about elephants in this passage, but I know that elephants were made on Day #6. How do I know this? Elephants live on land, therefore they must have been made on Day #6. So also with every living creature. Every living thing was made at some point in the first week, either on Day #5 or Day #6. Therefore, anything we might call a "dragon" or a "dinosaur" must have also been made in that first week. Pterodactyl? Day #5. T-Rex? Day #6. And by the way, I should note that what we see here as "*sea monsters*" (in verse 21) translates the Hebrews word "TANNIN," and this word is sometimes translated elsewhere as "*serpent*" or "*dragon*," in addition to "*sea monster*." By the way, TANNIM (with an "M") is the plural form of the word "jackal." And you might need to know this, because sometimes the translators will note this in the margin, and you may need to decide between one or the other based on the context. If you're interested, I can recommend a pretty good scholarly article on this.

But this word "TANNIN" is used elsewhere in scripture to refer to a powerful creature that needed a "*guard*" to keep it under control (in Job 7:12). The word is used (in Psalm 74:13) to refer to God's power in breaking the heads of the "*sea monsters*." The word is used to describe a creature that only God is powerful enough to punish and pierce (in Isaiah 27:1 and Isaiah 51:9), where the word is translated "*dragon*." And (in Isaiah 27:1) this "*dragon*," by the way, is mentioned together with "*Leviathan*" (another massive creature of some kind), but we will get back to Leviathan in a moment. Some have suggested that "TANNIN" describes not a specific species of animal, but may actually encompass a number of animals based on certain characteristics.

Well, if dinosaurs and dragons have been with us from the beginning (from the first week), then wouldn't we expect some reference to these creatures elsewhere in scripture? As we try to give a brief answer to that question, let's realize that the word "dinosaur" wasn't invented until the mid-1800's, even though dinosaurs

obviously existed prior to the mid-1800's. Back in the mid-1800's, a guy in England studied some huge fossilized teeth, they were obviously amphibian of some kind, but they were incredibly large, so he described the creature as a "dinosaur," a "great" or "terrible lizard." This is Sir Richard Owen. To me, he looks a little bit like a dinosaur, but this is the origin of the word, and it came to refer not to a specific species, but to a rather broad category of ancient creatures that were huge and lizard-like. But I'm just saying that we can't expect an ancient book (like the Bible) to use a word that wouldn't exist until many years later, in the mid-1800's. We might, though, expect to find dinosaur-type creatures to be described in the Bible or even called by a different name.

I would invite you to turn with me to two chapters in the book of Job, starting with Job 40. In Job, of course, Satan is allowed to test Job's faith, and God allows Job to lose just about everything – pretty much everything he owns, his children, and even his health. Most of the book is Job getting harassed by his friends, but we also have Job questioning or criticizing God a little bit. And we understand. Terrible things happen, and sometimes we want to ask God, "God, why are you doing this to me?" Well, in response to getting challenged by Job, God answers Job in Job 40:2 and says, ***"Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it."*** In other words: Who do you think you are? And Job then answers the Lord and says, ***"Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to You? I lay my hand on my mouth. Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; even twice, and I will add nothing more."*** Job, then, is silent, and allows God to continue. And God does continue! Starting in verse 6, God cuts loose and answers Job from out of the storm and says,

***"Now gird up your loins like a man;
I will ask you, and you instruct Me.
Will you really annul My judgment?
Will you condemn Me that you may be justified?
Or do you have an arm like God,
And can you thunder with a voice like His?"***

And with that, God continues to appeal to nature, to the creation. I made this, and this, and this: Now, explain it, Job! And in this context, we come to Job 40:15-24, and as we read this, I would invite you to be asking: What is this? What is this animal God describes?

- ¹⁵ ***"Behold now, Behemoth, which I made as well as you;
He eats grass like an ox.***
- ¹⁶ ***"Behold now, his strength in his loins
And his power in the muscles of his belly.***
- ¹⁷ ***"He bends his tail like a cedar;
The sinews of his thighs are knit together.***
- ¹⁸ ***"His bones are tubes of bronze;
His limbs are like bars of iron.***
- ¹⁹ ***"He is the first of the ways of God;
Let his maker bring near his sword.***
- ²⁰ ***"Surely the mountains bring him food,
And all the beasts of the field play there.***
- ²¹ ***"Under the lotus plants he lies down,
In the covert of the reeds and the marsh.***
- ²² ***"The lotus plants cover him with shade;
The willows of the brook surround him.***
- ²³ ***"If a river rages, he is not alarmed;***

He is confident, though the Jordan rushes to his mouth.
²⁴ *“Can anyone capture him when he is on watch,
 With barbs can anyone pierce his nose?”*

I hope we notice the name of this creature up in verse 15, **“Behold now Behemoth.”** I believe this is the only time this word is used in the Bible, and commentators suggest (based on the context) that it describes a “very large animal.” Well, duh! But what is it? I have a footnote in my Bible indicating that some of the earlier translations have identified this creature as a hippopotamus. Okay, just scanning back over the description God gives here, do we see any possible issues identifying this creature as a hippopotamus? A lot of it fits, but have you seen the tail on a hippo? I hesitate to embarrass the poor creature on the wall up here, but does that tail remind you of a cedar tree? Not exactly! And then, in verse 24, God seems to be bragging that nobody can catch this creature. We’ve been catching hippos forever. So why would translators 400 years ago try to suggest that God is talking about a hippo here? Because they hadn’t found any dinosaur bones yet! Dinosaur, in fact, wasn’t even a word.

But is there a massive creature with a tail like a cedar that we do know about today? I don’t know about you, but this sounds a whole lot like what I grew up referring to as a Brontosaurus, or an Apatosaurus, as I believe it is now called. We have the massive tail, the strength in the loins, the ability to eat massive amounts of vegetation, the ability to wade through rivers without fear, and so on.

And in all of this, I do find it interesting that this is a pretty comprehensive description of this animal, isn’t it? Can you think of another animal in the Bible that has ten whole verses talking about how awesome it is? Maybe I’ve missed it, but I don’t think we even have this about lions, or bears, or any other fearsome creatures. God, though, goes into great detail on this one. It’s almost as if God is proud of himself: Job, you need to look at what I’ve made! Nobody else could even imagine a creature like this! The way I see it, then, we actually have a more detailed description of dinosaurs in the Bible than any other creature.

But wait, there’s more! Before we wrap it up this morning, let’s move into the next chapter as we find that God continues by describing yet another mighty creature. And just giving a preview here, the word God uses to describe this creature is **“Leviathan”** (in Isaiah 27:1). Some of you might have a footnote on **“Leviathan,”** suggesting that some of the older translators have tried to identify this creature as a “crocodile.” So, let’s keep that in mind, and as we look at Job 41, let’s ask ourselves: Does this creature sound like a crocodile? There are some similarities, but I want us to make some mental notes of the differences (why this creature cannot be a crocodile). Let’s continue with Job 41,

¹ *“Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook?
 Or press down his tongue with a cord?”*

² *“Can you put a rope in his nose
 Or pierce his jaw with a hook?”*

³ *“Will he make many supplications to you,
 Or will he speak to you soft words?”*

⁴ *“Will he make a covenant with you?
 Will you take him for a servant forever?”*

⁵ *“Will you play with him as with a bird,
 Or will you bind him for your maidens?”*

⁶ *“Will the traders bargain over him?
 Will they divide him among the merchants?”*

⁷ *“Can you fill his skin with harpoons,*

Or his head with fishing spears?

- ⁸ *"Lay your hand on him;
Remember the battle; you will not do it again!*
- ⁹ *"Behold, your expectation is false;
Will you be laid low even at the sight of him?*
- ¹⁰ *"No one is so fierce that he dares to arouse him;
Who then is he that can stand before Me?*
- ¹¹ *"Who has given to Me that I should repay him?
Whatever is under the whole heaven is Mine.*
- ¹² *"I will not keep silence concerning his limbs,
Or his mighty strength, or his orderly frame.*
- ¹³ *"Who can strip off his outer armor?
Who can come within his double mail?*
- ¹⁴ *"Who can open the doors of his face?
Around his teeth there is terror.*
- ¹⁵ *"His strong scales are his pride,
Shut up as with a tight seal.*
- ¹⁶ *"One is so near to another
That no air can come between them.*
- ¹⁷ *"They are joined one to another;
They clasp each other and cannot be separated.*
- ¹⁸ *"His sneezes flash forth light,
And his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning.*
- ¹⁹ *"Out of his mouth go burning torches;
Sparks of fire leap forth.*
- ²⁰ *"Out of his nostrils smoke goes forth
As from a boiling pot and burning rushes.*
- ²¹ *"His breath kindles coals,
And a flame goes forth from his mouth.*
- ²² *"In his neck lodges strength,
And dismay leaps before him.*
- ²³ *"The folds of his flesh are joined together,
Firm on him and immovable.*
- ²⁴ *"His heart is as hard as a stone,
Even as hard as a lower millstone.*
- ²⁵ *"When he raises himself up, the mighty fear;
Because of the crashing they are bewildered.*
- ²⁶ *"The sword that reaches him cannot avail,
Nor the spear, the dart or the javelin.*
- ²⁷ *"He regards iron as straw,
Bronze as rotten wood.*
- ²⁸ *"The arrow cannot make him flee;
Slingstones are turned into stubble for him.*

- ²⁹ *“Clubs are regarded as stubble;
He laughs at the rattling of the javelin.*
- ³⁰ *“His underparts are like sharp potsherds;
He spreads out like a threshing sledge on the mire.*
- ³¹ *“He makes the depths boil like a pot;
He makes the sea like a jar of ointment.*
- ³² *“Behind him he makes a wake to shine;
One would think the deep to be gray-haired.*
- ³³ *“Nothing on earth is like him,
One made without fear.*
- ³⁴ *“He looks on everything that is high;
He is king over all the sons of pride.”*

We don't have time to go through this chapter verse by verse, but are we getting a picture here? God is describing a creature he refers to as *“Leviathan.”* And we do see some similarities between *“Leviathan”* and a crocodile? Yes, we have the big teeth, the armor, and all that. But did you note some of the differences? To start with (in verse 1), we have this question, *“Can you catch him with a fish hook?”* Have you ever seen the show *Swamp People*? They catch alligators with fish hooks! And I know there are differences between alligators and crocodiles, but alligators are caught with giant hooks. They put a chunk of rotten chicken on a big hook, they hang it right over the water, and the gators bite and get caught. Secondly, in this first paragraph, let's also note that these creatures cannot be caught or controlled. Some of you know that we went to Florida a year and a half ago. I can tell you: People wrestle alligators down there. And again, I know crocodiles are different, but they are also somewhat similar. Thirdly (in verses 18-21), this creature breathes fire, doesn't it? Crocodiles are not known for lighting stuff on fire. Then (in verse 25), *“When he raises himself up, the mighty fear.”* As far as I know, crocodiles aren't really known for raising themselves up and towering over people. And then (in verse 30), *“His underparts are like sharp potsherds.”* I did just a few minutes of research on crocodiles this week, and what I found said that crocodiles are vulnerable from underneath. And then (in verse 34), we have this statement that this creature, *“...looks on everything that is high; he is king over all the sons of pride.”* And is this a reference to this creature flying? Perhaps. In Isaiah 30:6 we have a reference to a *“flying serpent.”* So, flying is not out of the question here. But again, back to Job, are crocodiles known for looking down on things that are high? Not at all!

“But wait a minute!” you might be saying, “Did you just say that this creature breathes fire? Surely, this must be a mythical creature! Animals just don't do that!” So, was God just making this up? In context, no. God is making the point: If you want to question my wisdom and power, simply look at what I have made, and reconsider! In context (in the surrounding chapters), God also describes the horse, the hawk, and the ostrich, and ravens, and locusts, and lions, and storks (although with much less detail). So, this makes no sense at all, then, if God is describing a mythical creature. No, this is something Job has seen, just as he had seen horses and hawks, and God is just giving the reminder: Look at what I have made, and be amazed!

Besides, have we forgotten that other animals that we still have with us today also do some amazing things? Have we forgotten the electric eel, powerful enough to shock a horse while somehow not shocking itself in the process? Have we forgotten that we have these creatures (even here in Wisconsin) that fly around in the summer with their rear-ends lighting up at night? Or have we forgotten the Komodo dragon whose bite is so deadly due to the bacteria in it, and yet it doesn't get sick itself? Or have we forgotten the bombardier beetle? When threatened, here is a tiny little beetle that has the ability to mix two highly toxic substances and simultaneously shoot those out its backside in a boiling hot blast of acidic, noxious spray, temporarily blinding

the predator that's about to attack. One scientist described the process as "extraordinarily intricate, a cross between tear gas and a tommy gun." And we're still learning about this creature, even today. I would encourage you to go online this afternoon and do a quick search for videos of the bombardier beetle. You will find all kinds of nature shows and even some information from some scientists at MIT who are using the latest in imaging to view the explosion inside this beetle's rear end as it happens. Basically, scientists are stumped as to how this process could have evolved without the beetle blowing itself up in the process every single time. We have the answer! But can we look at something like the bombardier beetle and say with complete confidence that no animal ever existed that had the power to breathe fire? Even looking around us today, I cannot rule that out.

Conclusion:

As we wrap it up today, I'd like to thank the young man who made the request. Today, we've looked at the first part of this: Are dragons or dinosaurs mentioned in the Bible? And we've discovered that yes, although the word "dinosaur" is not used, we do have descriptions that seem to fit some of what we now know about various dinosaurs. Next week, if the Lord wills, let's come back together to ask what kind of evidence we have for humans and dinosaurs or dragons coexisting, and then we'll close next week by asking: What happened to these creatures?

In just a moment, Josh will lead us in the only song I know of that mentions dragons, but before we sing, let's go to God in prayer.

Our Father in Heaven,

You are the God of all creation. You made us and everything that's ever lived on this earth. We are amazed at what you have done, and we are thankful for your creativity expressed in the world around us. We are truly amazed, and we worship you for it.

We love you, Father, and we come to you today through Jesus, through whom this world was created. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com