

Dragons?

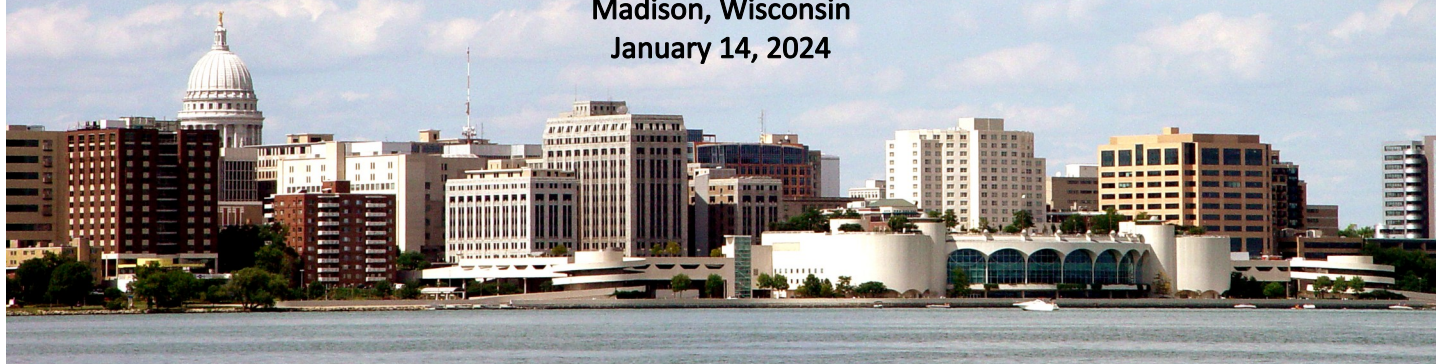
Part 2: Evidence & What Happened?

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Four Lakes Church of Christ

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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, but we are also here to preach the love of God who sent his Son to save us. He died in our place, he was buried, but he was raised up on the first day of the week, and this is the gospel (the good news). 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 obeying the Lord's command 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 this looks like. And today, we have several, starting with an update from the Hindsbury Road Church of Christ in Barbados. This might be our first update from Barbados, as far as I can remember, but they posted a few days ago, and they say, "And the Lord added... The angels in heaven rejoice, let us welcome sister Teanna to the family of God."

And then we have another, a little closer to home, from down in Paducah, Kentucky (where Josh Yancy's parents worship). They posted earlier this week, and they say, "We rejoice that Randy Perdew was baptized this morning at Central. He has been studying through Back to the Bible and decided that 'There is no time like the present.' Praise God for his decision!" So good to see this! And we share these two 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, and since there's some overlap, we've combined this with a study on DINOSAURS. Last week, we started by asking, "Are dragons or dinosaurs mentioned in the Bible?" And we learned, first of all, that yes, dinosaurs are mentioned (along with all other living creatures) in Genesis 1. In Genesis 1, we have a description of the creation in six days, with sea creatures and flying animals being created on Day #5 and all land animals created on Day #6. Dinosaurs would have been made on one of those two days. We learned that the word translated as "*sea*

monsters" (in Genesis 1:21) is a word that can also be translated as "serpent" or "dragon," depending on the context. This same word is then used several times in Job and in the book of Psalms, where it's tied to a variety of powerful creatures. We then spent most of our time together last week looking at Job 40 and 41. Job has questioned God's wisdom, and God responds by telling Job to look around, to consider what God has made, including two creatures, the first of which is in Job 40, where we have this detailed description of "*Behemoth*," a huge animal with a tail like a cedar tree – most likely a brontosaurus or Apatosaurus (or some other huge animal that is no longer around today). And then we moved into Job 41, with the description of "*Leviathan*," another huge creature, but this one is covered in armor-like scales, is very difficult to capture or kill, and looks down from above on all other creatures (a possible reference to flying), and among other features, it also seems that this creature has the power to breathe fire. And in context, these were real creatures that God is telling Job to consider, to look at, as proof of God's power and creative mind.

This week, I'd like for us to continue by asking: Do we have any evidence that dragons or dinosaurs lived at the same times as people, and finally: What happened to these creatures? However, before we get to these two questions, I want to thank you guys for reaching out this week! I heard more feedback over last Sunday's sermon than I've heard from all of last year's lessons put together!

- First of all, one of our senior saints called this week to let me know what happened to the dinosaurs. I think she saw a cartoon in the newspaper this week, and the cartoon explained that the meat-eating dinosaurs ate all of the plant-eating dinosaurs, and as a result, the meat-eating dinosaurs died of high cholesterol. Now we know!
- And then we had a family from Illinois get in touch. They join us regularly on You-Tube, and they wanted us to know that they've enjoyed the lessons on Hebrews, but that they really loved the lesson on Dragons and Dinosaurs, because they actually have a dragon in their home! It's a Nile Monitor Lizard that's currently about 3-4 months old and can get anywhere from 4-6 feet long by the time it's an adult. They explain that it's feisty, which is why their adult son is wearing gloves in this picture. So, they wanted the young person who requested this lesson to know that dragons exist, although this one does not breathe fire at the moment! They also have a bearded dragon. Very interesting, and thank you so much for allowing us to share this today.
- We've had some other good comments and questions come in online. I'm in the process of getting to those as best I can. I have followed up with some, but not all.
- And then I had an interesting experience in the pool on Monday morning. As most of you know, I try to leave home just before 5 am and do some swimming and exercise in the deep end when they open at 5:30 (down in Oregon). Several weeks ago, I thought I saw a dime on the bottom of the pool (12-feet down), so I dove down and picked it up, and it was a diamond studded silver horseshoe type earring. I brought it up to the surface and turned it in at the front desk. A week later, I thought I saw a penny on the bottom, so I dove down to get it; no, that was one of those circle band-aids. Abort mission! I left that right there! Well, on Monday morning (the day after preaching on dinosaurs), I see something on the bottom, I dive down to get it, and lo and behold it is a dinosaur!

So, I have had dinosaurs on the brain this week!

- I. **This morning, then, we continue by asking the question: OTHER THAN THOSE PASSAGES WE CONSIDERED LAST WEEK, WE HAVE ANY ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE THAT DRAGONS OR DINOSAURS EXISTED AT THE SAME TIME AS PEOPLE? So, we are narrowing the focus of our study.**

And this is an important question, because according to the evolutionary time table, the answer should be: No. And these figures seem to be constantly changing (which is interesting in itself), but as I understand it, the

latest theory is that dinosaurs evolved roughly 200 million years ago and became extinct roughly 65 million years before humans came on the scene. Most scientists, then, would say: No, humans and dinosaurs never crossed paths; they were separated by tens of millions of years. However, this does not fit with what we know to be true from scripture. In addition to what we learned last week, Jesus himself said something very interesting (in the context of marriage) in Mark 10:6, when he said, ***“But from the beginning of creation, God MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE.”*** Jesus, therefore, confirms the creation account we studied last week, that humans were made at the ***“beginning of creation.”*** And in this statement, Jesus also confirms what God said through Moses. In Exodus 20:11, God gave a reason for establishing the Sabbath as a day of rest for the Jewish people, and he said, ***“For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.”*** In the evolutionary timetable, humans popped up at the very end of a very long timeline, but Jesus agrees with Moses says that God made male and female at the ***“beginning of creation,”*** at the same time he made everything else.

So, since this is the case, since humans were made either on the same day (or the day after) as all other living creatures, we might expect to find at least some evidence that humans and dinosaurs lived together (other than scripture, as we studied last week). And I’d like to at least give us something to think about by suggesting the possibility, first of all, that some of those stories of dragons and other terrifying creatures passed down through the years may have some basis in reality. I am NOT saying that all of these stories are true; they are not. It’s just interesting to me that so many cultures share some very similar stories about creatures that we might describe today as dinosaur-like. And this doesn’t mean that we are putting our faith in myths and legends (far from it). However, if people really did live alongside some of these creatures we now know as dinosaurs, wouldn’t we expect those stories to be passed down in oral (and even written) histories? If I go to war with a T-Rex and come out on top in that fight, I will most likely tell my children, and they will tell their children’s children, and so on. I would just encourage you to look into some of those Chinese dragon legends and even a written account like Beowulf, with this in mind. How is it that cultures from opposite sides of the planet have such similar stories? Why do we have stories of dragon-like creatures from England to China, as well as in places like Italy, and Germany, and Greece, and Egypt, and Japan, and India? Why is that?

Like many of you, I remember studying Beowulf both in high school and at the college level, and we are actually starting to identify some of those old characters as real people who actually lived. So, why might that not also be the case with some of the terrifying creatures in that piece of literature? Grendel, for example, was a massive creature who walked upright on two legs, but had rather wimpy forearms, and Beowulf killed him, of course, by ripping his arm off before Grendel heads off into the swampland to die. They then mount that arm in the mead hall. Or later, we think about a dragon destroying his home, and Beowulf going off to find it, but getting fatally injured in the process. That creature is described as a “fearsome earth-dragon,” further described as a “crooked, coiled worm” that “flies through the night,” and is “enveloped in flame,” causing men to “fear him greatly.” What is that? Was it real? And doesn’t it sound at least a bit like the Leviathan from Job 41? I’m just suggesting that we not be too quick to dismiss some of these descriptions of terrifying creatures from the distant past. It’s easy for us today to say, “Well, there’s no way humans could have lived alongside such terrifying creatures!” But, do we not live alongside grizzlies and polar bears, even today? Those are some terrifying creatures. I’ve told you before about my trip out to Yosemite National Park last summer. I was in a campground with bear warnings all over. I stashed my food in the bear box and got up before sunrise to cook some bacon and eggs using a headlamp, and as I’m cooking, I see some movement over beside me, and a bear has come down the mountain and is about a picnic table away from me and is very much interested in my breakfast. I had a firearm and bear spray at the ready, but the sign at the entrance to the campground suggested yelling and throwing a handful of gravel in the bear’s face; so, that’s what I did. He paused, look around, and decided to wander back up the mountain. At that point, I ate my breakfast faster than I had ever

eaten anything, and as I was packing up to get out of there, the bear came back to the very same spot. I took a few pics as I got in the car and I got out of there. My point in sharing this is: I'm telling you about it! I survived an encounter with a terrifying creature. And yes, as I said, polar bears and grizzlies do kill people. But when humans prevail, we talk about it, and those stories are passed down. Could this not also be the case with other creatures?

Well, beyond written accounts, we also have some interesting artwork from ancient times. And I'll just give a brief summary of several examples. And I'm not saying that any one of these necessarily proves anything on its own; however, if the Bible teaches that humans and dinosaurs co-existed (which it does, since they were made at the same time), then we would perhaps expect somebody somewhere at some time to draw one of these creatures. We might expect some kind of visual representation, just as we have for other animals throughout time. And that's what we find.

And the first example comes from the tomb of Richard Bell, the bishop of a cathedral in Carlisle, England, near the Scottish border. The cathedral was established in 1122 AD, and Richard Bell became the bishop of that cathedral in 1478, and served until his death at the age of 86, in 1496. When he died, he was buried under the floor of that cathedral, which was common for religious leaders at that time, and they decorated the floor over his grave with some intricate engravings of various animals. And among these very real animals (like dogs, and fish, and eels, and bats, and bears), we have several images of what appear to be dinosaurs. Some have identified these as Apatosaurus. So the question is: How can this be, if dinosaurs truly went extinct 60-70 million years ago, and when the first dinosaur bones were not found until the mid-1800's? And why put these creatures right alongside other animals that were clearly living at the time?

We find another example in the petroglyphs (or cave drawings) out at the base of Kachina Bridge in Utah. I would highly recommend checking out the article on www.apologeticspress.org, where two Christian friends (Kyle Butt and Eric Lyons) went out there to see this for themselves. Evolutionary scientists, of course, will try to tell us that this creature here is a horse, even though horses were not introduced by the Spanish until the late 1500's. But we look at this drawing, and we realize: We don't have a creature like this today. It does, though, look almost exactly like a dinosaur known as Diplodocus. And like the creatures on Richard Bell's tomb in England, this one is also found alongside other known animals like bighorn sheep, snakes, as well as drawings of people and human hand-prints. But again, I would encourage you to look up this article on your own on apologeticspress.org. We're just giving a brief overview here.

We have another interesting example right here in the United States, going back to an expedition directed by Samuel Hubbard, Honorary Curator of Archaeology with the Oakland Museum, in Oakland, California, back in 1924. There were others on the expedition, but they were headed back to a site once inhabited by the Hava Supai which seems to be located within the area of the Grand Canyon. They found etchings on the walls of the canyon, including images of elephants and ibex, among others. But it's the image on the wall up here that really stumped the scientists. It appears to be a dinosaur, perhaps a Edmontosaurus, but according to evolutionary theory, that's not possible! In reporting on this find, Dr. Hubbard, said, "The fact that some prehistoric man made a pictograph of a dinosaur on the walls of this canyon upsets completely all of our theories regarding the antiquity of man.... The fact that the animal is upright and balanced on its tail would seem to indicate that the prehistoric artist must have seen it alive." So, here is another example that certainly seems to indicate that human beings saw these creatures and co-existed for at least some period of time.

I'll share one more this morning, and I won't say too much about it, because I've included an article written by a friend in the cubbyholes this morning. This is a picture Neal Pollard took of his son at the Angkor Wat temple complex in Cambodia. This temple was built from the late 1100's to the early 1200's, and these medallions

feature all kinds of actual animals, but then we have this one that I've marked with the red arrow. What in the world is that? I know, because I found it in 12 feet of water in the swimming pool this past Monday. That is a stegosaurus. I believe (and many others believe) that this is further evidence that people co-existed with dinosaurs at some point. So, we have looked at two lines of evidence for the co-existence of humans with dinosaurs: 1.) The commonality of myths and legends in nearly all cultures around the world, and 2.) Artwork depicting these creatures, also from all around the world.

II. Before we wrap it up today, I also wanted us to at least briefly consider the question: WHAT HAPPENED TO THESE CREATURES?

First of all, a vast majority of all animals (including dinosaurs) would have died in the great flood. We find in Genesis 6-9 that God decides to flood the earth and pretty much start over with Noah and his family. We won't go into great detail, but God works with Noah and has him put two of every creature on a giant barge (the ark). Were there dinosaurs on the ark? Yes. But that's impossible, because dinosaurs are huge. Take small ones! But I believe the flood explains most fossils. Hypothetically speaking, if a chipmunk takes one bite out of every strawberry in my garden, and if I were to somehow cause this creature to stop living and toss his carcass out into the middle of my yard as a warning to the others, would that chipmunk turn into a fossil? Why not? Because it would rot, because a giant hawk would swoop down and eat it (hypothetically, I've seen both scenarios, and I have zero chipmunk fossils in my yard). So what would it take to make a fossil. It's not just TIME, because we've already established that if I lay a dead animal out in my yard, it will disappear long before it fossilizes. A fossil is formed when something is suddenly and completely covered in tons and tons of mud (or sediment); so we have not only TIME, but we have the critter protected from normal decay, and we have PRESSURE. And this is obviously a very simplified explanation, but we have what it takes in the great flood. We have 40 days of rain with water coming up from below and down from above, we have this flood last roughly a year killing all land animals that are not on the ark, and we have the floodwaters receding, causing many living things to get buried in sediment. If that were to happen (which it did), then we would expect to find fossils all over the world (which we do). This explains why we have some ancient version of a squid plastered against the roof of a cave right down the road in southwest Wisconsin (at Cave of the Mounds). How did a squid make its way to Wisconsin, and how did it get buried in sediment without getting eaten by something else? I know! The flood explains most fossils. However, not all dinosaurs died in the flood. Some made it on the ark. And we know this without a doubt because last week we read about at least two of those in the book of Job (and Job lived after the flood).

But where are they now? A vast majority are most likely extinct. And just summarizing the research from a creation science point of view, the climate on earth experienced a huge change as a result of the flood. Some have basically suggested that it brought on something of an ice age. Remember, Job lives not long after the flood. He still sees these creatures, but you know what else Job sees that we read more about in Job than just about anywhere else in the Bible? Job sees ice and snow (in several passages)! And we might even have a reference to glaciers in Job 37:10. And Job lived in an area that is basically now a desert. It wasn't then. Some have suggested, then, that the "climate crisis" brought on by the great flood changed the earth in such a way that these giant reptiles could no longer survive as they once did.

But there's something else that happened after the flood: Before the flood, animals and humans only ate plants. After the flood, though, God allows Noah and his descendants to start eating meat. In Genesis 9:1-3, ***"And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. The fear of you and the terror of you will be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given. Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant.'"*** Do we see another possibility here?

Mmmmm, dinosaur! And like many other creatures, dinosaurs also eventually went extinct. But I love what God does here: You can eat meat now, but I will make the animals scared of you, to make it a fair fight. You guys know I'm not a hunter, but some of you are, and you know that animals generally don't walk up to you and volunteer! No, you cover yourselves in scent, and cover yourselves in camouflage, because God has made it a challenge. Oh, and by the way, extinction is the norm, isn't it? Evolution would suggest that brand new creatures should be popping up on a regular basis, but that's not what we see, is it? We see death. We see entire species ceasing to exist, even in our lifetime. Sin brought death into the world.

And this, by the way, is another reason why dinosaurs didn't cease to exist millions of years before Adam and Eve. Romans 5:12 tells us that Adam's sin is what first brought death into this world. Back in Genesis, therefore, death was brand new. Death was something they had never seen before.

So, where are the dinosaurs? Most are dead. And I say "most," because there's a lot in this world we still haven't discovered. Earlier this week, one of our former members posted online about a "Loch Ness Ladle" she found on Amazon. As if I couldn't get any weirder today, now I'm talking about the Loch Ness Monster. Most dinosaurs, though, either 1.) died in the flood, or 2.) they died after the flood due to the drastic change in the environment, or 3.) they were hunted to the point of extinction, just as we have seen with so many other creatures through the years. As I was preparing this morning's lesson, I said to myself: I'm talking like a crazy man! And I've really tried to get away from using "crazy" as a description of things (I hate to further stigmatize any kind of mental illness), but I know that from the world's point of view, I have literally been talking like a crazy man this morning. But you know what's truly crazy? Try to digest some of the current theories concerning the demise of the dinosaurs. It seems like somebody has a new theory every year or so: It was a giant comet, they died from overeating, mammals ate their eggs, their eggs became either too thick or too thin due to disease, there was a volcano, they all inhaled poisonous gas, there was a giant sunspot, they all got cataracts and could no longer find other dinosaurs to mate with, caterpillars ate all their food, aliens did them in. There are some weird theories out there. I think the Far Side might have suggested that smoking is what killed the dinosaurs. So, I'm just saying that the Bible does have some pretty reasonable possibilities.

Conclusion:

As we wrap it up today, first of all, I'd like to pass along a good resource, Apologetics Press. This is an organization started many years ago by members of the Lord's church. I started getting their publication Reason and Revelation back in my early teens, a gift, as I remember it, from Dr. Russel Artist, a retired biology professor from David Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee. But if you'd like to know more about dinosaurs, if you'd like to dig into the age of the earth, or anything like that, I would highly recommend going to www.apologeticspress.org and doing a search. If it is in any way related to science and the Bible, they will most likely have something to say about it.

But secondly, I'd like to say "thanks," once again, to the young man who made the request for this short series of lessons. I have enjoyed doing the research, and it has been a good learning experience for me personally.

In just a moment, Caleb will lead us in a song, 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