

Does the Existence of Dinosaurs Disprove the Bible?

How Do Christians Account for Dinosaurs and the Death That We See in the Fossil Record?



A Common Question

Perhaps the most frequent question that is asked of me when we talk about the age of the earth is this: "What do Christians say about dinosaurs?" Doesn't the very existence of dinosaurs in the fossil record, contradict the claims of the Bible?

There seems to be an impression, even amongst Christians, that the existence of dinosaurs presents the Christian community with a true dilemma. There seems to be something contradictory about the archeological record of dinosaur life, and the biblical record of creation. This apparent contradiction exists for a number of reasons, and we need to talk about them so that we can move forward to accurately evaluate the natural and special revelation that God has given us.



First, The Issue of Silence

The first issue seems to be the uncomfortable silence that exists in the Biblical creation account when it comes to dinosaurs. Why aren't they mentioned specifically as part of God's creation? It is true that there don't appear to be any references to dinosaurs in the Biblical record (although some will maintain that the 'behemoth' and the 'leviathan' mentioned in Job - the Bible's oldest book - chapters 40 and 41 are, in fact, references to dinosaurs). But the argument from silence is really not a fair argument to make here, as it assumes that the short Biblical creation account actually exists to provide humans with a concrete scientific chronology, when it exists for no such purpose. When we remember that God wrote the short memorable account to a specific people in a specific period of history, the issue seems absolutely trivial. God's intention here was for the ancient Jews (who knew nothing of dinosaurs) to understand that they were created in God's image, and that their world was also the product of a creator God who considered them to be the crown of His creation. Beyond this, God had no detailed scientific purpose. Remember that the Bible is God's love letter to us and not a science manual.

Also, try to remember that the Genesis account is also silent about all kinds of creatures, if we are going to be picky about specific identification of species or life forms that fall underneath the larger categories that ARE listed in the Biblical record. While the Genesis account says that God created all kinds of animals that walk and crawl on the ground, it does not specifically mention marsupials for example. They are simply a subset of the larger group mentioned by Moses. In addition, there is nothing said about reptiles or amphibians or insects. Clearly Moses was aware of these creatures, for he also wrote the account of the serpent in the Garden and the frogs and insects of the Egyptian plagues! Why is He silent about them in the creation account? Because every piece of literature is written for a specific purpose and this must be considered when we read the literature. The Biblical creation account is far more interested in man's role within creation and man's relationship to the Creator than it is interested in listing every species that ever lived on planet earth. Don't be misled by silence here.



Second, The Issue of Age

The second issue that seems to plague Christians and skeptics as they consider the possibility that dinosaurs existed millions of years ago, and well before the existence of humans, is the belief (held by many Christians) that the earth is far too young to account for the long dinosaur history that appears in the fossil record. But it is actually

fully possible for Christians to believe in a very ancient earth, and in long creation days, without contradicting the teaching of the Bible. (For more information on the ancient earth view of the Biblical creation account and the epoch view of the creation days, please visit [THIS](#) page)



And Finally, The Issue of Death

But there is yet another issue that troubles many Christians and skeptics as they ponder the existence of dinosaurs. It is the idea that nothing on earth died before the fall of Adam. Many Christians argue that the scriptures teach this idea of a perfect world before Adam's sin; a world in which nothing dies. If this is true, we would have great difficulty in explaining the presence of death that we observe in the ancient fossil record. Clearly, all kinds of species of life, both very primitive and more advanced can be seen captured in their death in the fossil record. How can this be, if death comes to the planet only through the sin of Adam? Doesn't the Bible teach that this is the case? Let's take a look at some important passages of scripture and see for ourselves:



Romans 5:12-14

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned- for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.

The first thing we need to define here is the word "death" ('thanatos' in the Greek). What kind of death is Paul talking about here? Is he talking about biological death or spiritual death? Well, in verse 21 of the very same passage, Paul says, "...just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Clearly Paul is contrasting 'death' with 'eternal life'. It certainly appears that Paul is referring to 'death' in its spiritual context, not its biological context. And this just so happens to be consistent with Genesis 2:6! In this passage in Genesis, Moses writes that God warned Adam and Eve that "in the day that you eat of the tree you will surely die" Well, Adam and Eve did not die biologically "in the day" that they ate from the tree, did they? But they did die spiritually in the sense that they came under the divine judgment of death as it was executed against man. Adam and Eve were then removed from the garden as a symbol of this spiritual death and were prevented from eating from the tree of life. While the biological sense of death is also meant here, it is clear that spiritual death is also in sight.

But let's go back to the passage in Romans 5 for a minute. We looked at the word used for "death", now let's look at the word used to say "the world" ('kosmos' in the Greek). It does appear that Paul is saying that death is the result of sin, and sin has entered into the entire world (including all other forms of life in addition to humans). If this is true, then it is easy to see why some Christians don't believe that ANYTHING died before Adam's sin. But, if we take a close look at how the word for 'the world' is being used here, it is clear that Paul is NOT actually speaking about all the world, but is instead talking directly about mankind. Look at how he uses the same word in verse 13: "...for before the law was given, sin was in the world ('kosmos'). But sin is not taken into account when there is no law." OK, we know one thing for sure; sin cannot be in the non-human realm. So what 'world' is Paul talking about here? He is talking about the world of human beings; the world of humanity. That's why Paul uses the phrase "all men" in the second portion of the passage (verse 12), and he uses it as a synonym for "world"! Now take a look at verse 18. There it is again, the expression "all men" being used as a synonym! In this

particular verse, Paul is saying that spiritual and physical death came to MANKIND as a result of the sin of Adam. That's why we see evidence of both animal and plant death in the fossil record long before the appearance of mankind. Sin brought death to mankind, not to the animal and plant world in general.



Was All Creation Cursed?

Some Christians have also argued that Paul said that all creation was forever changed by the fall of Adam and was 'frustrated'. Part of this 'frustration' was the result that animals now prey on one another. The implication is that death and carnivorous activity did NOT exist before the sin of Adam. The argument comes from this passage of scripture:



Romans 8:18-21

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

Many Christians have taken this passage to mean that before the frustration of the planet, there was no death or decay of any kind. While it is clear that Paul IS talking about all of creation here (unlike the passage in Romans 5), it is NOT clear that Paul is talking about animal and plant death prior to Adam when he uses words like 'corruption' or 'decay'. In fact, Paul seems to be referencing Isaiah as he describes how creation is waiting eagerly to be liberated from its bondage to decay:



Isaiah 24:4-6

The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the exalted of the earth languish. The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt. Therefore earth's inhabitants are burned up, and very few are left.



Isaiah 26:19-21

But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead... See, the LORD is coming out of his dwelling to punish the people of the earth for their sins. The earth will disclose the blood shed upon her; she will conceal her slain no longer.

Isaiah seems to be saying that the earth mourns because it is concealing its slain. It mourns because it is a mass graveyard! This is also what Paul is talking about in Romans 8. The earth will be liberated of its dead at the end of the age, when the dead are resurrected. This passage does not eliminate the possibility that plants and animals died before Adam's sin.



Did They Eat Meat Before Noah?

A friend of mine told me recently that many of his beliefs related to this issue of animal death prior to Adam come from the Genesis creation account and God's commands to Noah following the flood. He believes that these two passages work

together to suggest that no animal ate meat prior to the great flood, and that no animal had to die prior to the fall of Adam to be eaten as food by other animals! Let's look at both passages:



Genesis 1:29-30

Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground — everything that has the breath of life in it — I give every green plant for food." And it was so.



Genesis 9:1-4

Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth. The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air, upon every creature that moves along the ground, and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hands. Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything. "But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it."

The Genesis 1 passage seems to be saying that God gave plants to the animals to be eaten for food prior to the fall of Adam. The Genesis 9 passage then seems to be lifting some kind of restriction on meat, suggesting that even humans were not eating animals prior to this point in history. If no one is eating animals until this point in time, then there would be no death prior to Adam caused by animals in search of a good meal. This does seem to fly in the face of archeological evidence of sharp toothed carnivorous dinosaurs who roam the earth, eating other animals. But look at Genesis 1:29-30 once again. There is nothing in this passage that says that animals were prohibited or unable to eat anything other than plants. It simply says that plants exist as part of creation to serve as food for the animals that were created next. Plants are to be the foundational element in the food chain, and indeed they are. The herbivores that are so dependant on plants for their survival are, in fact, the base diet of the carnivores. So, in essence, both herbivores and carnivores alike are dependant on plants for their survival. And look now at Genesis 9. This is a command that is directed at Noah and mankind. It has little or nothing to say about the behavior of the 'lower' animals themselves and certainly does NOT eliminate the possibility that animals ate each other and died prior to the sin of Adam.



Are the End Times a Restoration, or a Promise of Something Better?

Many Christians also point to the end times predictions of Isaiah to make a case that the world was without death prior to the sin of Adam. Isaiah clearly describes the eschatological future world as a place where carnivores will no longer eat other animals:



Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:25

The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea... The wolf and the lamb will

feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the LORD.

Christians sometimes read these words as a description of what the world must have been like before sin. After all, the scriptures have described Jesus as the second Adam who ushers in a new world; a new inheritance for us as the children of God. Doesn't the second Adam simply return us to the state of the first Adam? Doesn't the new world then resemble the world as it was before sin? Not necessarily. It is certainly a stretch to assume that the second Adam ushers in a perfect world which is merely a RESTORATION of the Garden of Eden. God promises us something even better than what Adam experienced in the Garden. There is nothing in the scripture that mandates that the Garden was a place of utter perfection, perfectly equal to the promised world that awaits us in the end times. We've already discussed all the passages of scripture that deal even tangentially with condition of the Garden. Any other assumption is just that: an assumption. Nothing in the Bible excludes the possibility that plants and animals died long before Adam was created by God.



The Biblical Argument for Death Prior to the Fall

In fact, the Bible actually teaches just the opposite. Let's take a look at the creation text found in Psalm 104, for example. Here is a poetic creation psalm that recalls in detail God's creation as recorded in Genesis. The first 18 verses carefully recollect the creation of the universe and the earth. The psalmist retells the creation of the heavens (vs. 2) and the earth (vs. 5), the creation of the oceans (vs. 6) and the solid ground (vs. 7), the creation of animals of the fields (vs. 11) and the birds of the air (vs. 12), the creation of plants (vs. 14) and trees (vs. 16). Then, starting in verse 19, the psalm starts to talk about the creation of the moon and sun, and explains that the moon was actually created by God so that nocturnal animals would have enough light to be able to prowl and hunt their prey:



Psalm 104:19-28

The moon marks off the seasons, and the sun knows when to go down. You bring darkness, it becomes night, and all the beasts of the forest prowl. The lions roar for their prey and seek their food from God. The sun rises, and they steal away; they return and lie down in their dens. Then man goes out to his work, to his labor until evening. How many are your works, O LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number — living things both large and small. There the ships go to and fro, and the leviathan, which you formed to frolic there. These all look to you to give them their food at the proper time. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.

Now notice a couple of things here. First, note that God clearly designed the lion to prowl for its prey. The food of the lion is obviously not vegetation here, and it is being described in the context of this creation psalm, right alongside with the description of the creation of the animals and the creation of the moon. Even this early in the creation order, lions appear to be hunting. But notice something more. Notice that this hunting exercise is not only condoned by God, but it has been given to the lion by God. He delights in it. The hunting activity of the lion pleases God and it is part of his perfect plan for the world. That's right, death before the fall of Adam is still described as part of God's perfect plan.



The Natural Argument for Death Prior to the Fall

And this description of carnivorous activity in the most ancient era of God's early creation DOES match what we see in God's natural revelation to us in the fossil record. The fossils tell us a lot about life on the early earth, and they DON'T tell us that evolution is true (but that's another story for another article!). Instead, the fossil record repeatedly tells us that life starts and stops; species appear suddenly and disappear just as suddenly in the millions of years prior to the sudden appearance of Adamic humans. And this is exactly what we would expect to see from a creator God. Not the slow evolution of species with millions of incremental transitional forms, but the sudden appearance of species over the course of history, some of which have been allowed to continue into the present era and some of whom have been eliminated completely. Death is recorded in the fossil record, that is for sure; and it is recorded long before the appearance of man. This is consistent with the Biblical interpretation that death was (and is) simply a part of God's creation plan for the animals and plants that surround us. We are different than the other animals and plants in our environment. We were created in God's image. We are destined for eternity. But this truth does not preclude the fact that the plants and animals we live with are not so designed.

I think it is hard for some of us to imagine that God would design ANY kind of death into his created world, especially the world of Adam and Eve prior to the fall. But clearly Psalm 104 indicates that His design of carnivorous activity was (and is) part of His perfect plan; part of His perfect design. Why would this be true? Perhaps it is because God's creative acts have always been targeted toward the very crown of his creation, mankind. Remember that Adam and Eve are the LAST created beings. They are the guests of honor at the banquet table that is being set for them by a holy creator. As the guests of honor, they enter the banquet room LAST. They alone are created in the image of God. All else has been designed for THEM. THEY have authority and dominion over everything else. If a cup drops from the table and breaks, it will be replaced. Plants and animals will be killed in order to prepare the banquet. In fact, much of the activity that is conducted prior to the entrance of the honored guests might be seen as destructive! But MANKIND was created for communion with God. MANKIND was created for eternal relationship and worship. We sometimes mistakenly elevate ALL of creation to the status that the Bible ascribes only to humans. We sometimes act as though the table setting is as important as the guest of honor.



Understanding the Evidence

It is disheartening to think that so many Christians struggle with the idea that dinosaurs existed on our planet, millions of years before Adam was created by God. As an ancient earth Christian who believes that the creation days are simply God-sized days of epoch proportion, I have never struggled with this. I have always simply assumed that dinosaurs are one of the 'kinds' of animals that were created in the fifth day of creation, an epoch period of time spanning thousands and thousands (and thousands!) of years, in which many species were created and extinguished by God, all as part of his perfect design and preparation for the crown of his creation, the human species. But I know that many Christians would disagree with me. Over the years I have seen them struggle with the evidence of the fossil record. Remember that if nothing can die before Adam sins, then nothing can die until Adam is already present on earth. If this is true, then we should see humans in the fossil record right next to the dinosaurs. We would NOT see death (of ANY kind) in the fossil record prior to the appearance of mankind.

I have seen many Christian archeologists claim that they have discovered human footprints right

next to dinosaur footprints (for a fair and balanced review of these findings, visit this [WEBPAGE](#)). The findings and claims of these archeologists have been cherished and venerated by many young earth Christians across the globe; touted as evidence that dinosaurs did NOT die before the presence of mankind. But these archeological digs and discoveries simply do NOT stand up to even modest scientific scrutiny. They are simply an example of what happens when we try to force the evidence to fit our preconceived conception or belief. Meanwhile, we still see no skeletal remains of humans, no evidence of human culture (i.e. tools, encampments, etc.) anywhere in the record that would indicate that humans ever lived any time close to the age of the dinosaurs. And that's OK. At least in an ancient earth view of the scriptures. Yes, dinosaurs did live and roam the earth. God created them. And yes, dinosaurs (and many other forms of animals and plants) did live and die before Adam was ever created. This was also part of God's good plan as he continued to prepare and shape the planet for the appearance of the crown of His creation, the human race.