

THE GREAT DINOSAUR CONTROVERSY

Presented by

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Iguanodon, Triceratops, Stegosaurus, Brontosaurus, Tyrannosaurus. Who were these strange creatures with the weird names? Where did they come from? Where did they go? Or, did these magnificent creatures of the past—some of whom stood over 3½ stories tall and weighed over 100 tons—ever really exist?

Whether we are young or old, dinosaurs always seem to capture our attention. Perhaps it is their strange-sounding names (like *Struthiomimus* or *Apatosaurus*). Perhaps it is their huge size (they were, after all, the largest, land-living creatures ever to inhabit the Earth!). Or perhaps it is the way they looked (*Stegasaurus*, for example, had huge vertical spines standing upright on its back, while *Tyrannosaurus* had massive back legs but tiny front limbs). Whatever it is about them that intrigues us, almost everyone is interested in dinosaurs.

But did dinosaurs **really** exist? There is no doubt about it—dinosaurs **really did exist**. The first discovery of dinosaurs in recent times occurred in the spring of 1822. Gideon Mantell, a country doctor from Great Britain with a life-long passion for collecting fossils, set out by horse and buggy to treat a patient in the English countryside. His wife Mary Ann went along to keep him company. While Dr. Mantell tended to his patient, Mrs. Mantell took a stroll and came across a pile of rocks on the side of the road. Among those rocks she glimpsed what appeared to be some large, fossilized teeth. She scooped them up and took them back to her husband, who was amazed because he had never seen such huge teeth before.

Dr. Mantell went to the rock quarry from which the stones had come, and there he discovered **more** teeth similar to those that his wife has found. He showed the teeth to several scientists, but none of them thought the teeth were from any type of previously unknown creature. However, Dr. Mantell was stubbornly sure that they were. In 1825, he finally named the long-dead owner of the teeth *Iguanodon* (which means “iguana-tooth,” since the teeth were shaped like those of an iguana, but were much larger). Several years later, more teeth like these were discovered in a different rock quarry. Now, no one doubted that *Iguanodon* had actually lived. Meanwhile, huge bones of yet another creature—*Megalosaurus*—had been dug up farther away in England.

By 1842, enough of these fossils had been discovered to convince the famous British scientist, Richard Owen, that a **whole tribe** of huge, lizard-like reptiles had lived in the distant past. Dr. Owen, who worked at the British Museum of Natural History in London, performed more studies on a variety of other bones and eventually named the creatures “dinosaurs”—which comes from the Greek words *deinos* and *sauros*, known to us today as simply “terribly great lizards.”

Soon, American scientists joined in the search for such creatures as well, and found more than twenty-eight different types of dinosaurs. Now no one doubted the existence of the dinosaurs. So, the question no longer was, “Did the dinosaurs **exist?**” Rather, the question was, “**When** did the dinosaurs exist?” It is this one question that has caused so much controversy, because people who believe in evolution say that dinosaurs evolved more than 165 million years ago, and that they became extinct approximately 65 million years ago. Those of us who accept the Bible as God’s Word know better, of course, because Genesis 1 and Exodus 20:11 tell us that God created **everything** in **six days**. That would include everything from bacteria to dinosaurs. Dinosaurs did not “evolve.” Rather, they were created by God, and they lived on the Earth at the same time as humans. Imagine how wonderful it would have been to live back then, and to get to see a real-life, 100-ton dinosaur!

One thing on which both creationists and evolutionists agree is that dinosaurs make **great** teaching tools. It is rare to find a child—even a very small child!—who does not have a keen interest in dinosaurs. From kindergarten through college, dinosaurs are used to teach students that evolution is a “fact.” In most public-school settings, whenever dinosaurs are mentioned, the discussion usually centers on how they evolved and why they became extinct. Students are told that these wondrous animals evolved **from** some ancient reptile **into** what we now know as birds. And as these things are being discussed, it also is quite common for teachers to use dinosaurs to tell children that the Earth is supposedly billions of years old—which, according to the Bible, is not true.

What effect does this kind of teaching have on young minds? Because almost all youngsters are fascinated by dinosaurs, and because teachers are among the most trusted of all adults, children often accept without question what they are told in public schools about dinosaurs. Some scientists today who believe in evolution have admitted that it was their study of dinosaurs that caused them to eventually give up their belief in God and to start believing in evolution instead. Dr. Edward Wilson of Harvard once wrote that when he was fifteen years old, he had “great fervor and interest in religion.” But, he said, “I left at seventeen when I got to the University of Alabama and learned about evolution.” How sad that is. This man lost his faith in God and the Bible because he came to believe in evolution instead.

Because dinosaurs are amazing animals, because they are such an effective teaching aid, and because they generally are used to teach about evolution, dinosaurs can be used as a tool to rob young people of their faith in God and His Word. This makes dinosaurs **very** important. And that is why Blake is now going to talk to you about dinosaurs and the Bible. I hope you will listen carefully to what he has to say.