

THE JESUS LIZARD AS EVIDENCE OF GOD'S EXISTENCE

Presented by

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One of the best-known stories about Jesus Christ is the account found in Matthew 14:22-27 about how He once walked on water. His disciples were in a boat on the Sea of Galilee when a bad storm came up without any warning. The disciples were scared, and they were afraid that they were going to die. So Jesus left the safety of the shore, walked out to the boat on the water, and comforted them. This was a true miracle, because no one had ever walked on water before. And no one has since then.

At least no **human** has. But did you know that God created a special **animal** that can walk on water? It's true. I'm talking about a unique creature known as a **basilisk lizard**. Because this animal can do what Jesus did and walk on water, scientists often call it "the Jesus lizard." This reptile, which lives near rivers and streams in rain forests in South America, is a member of the same scientific family as the iguana, and usually grows to be around two-and-a-half feet long. Normally, it is either brown or green in color.

But the most amazing feature about this lizard is that it can walk on water. Well, actually, it doesn't **walk**. It **runs!** The lizard's secret lies in its large webbed hind feet, which have flaps of skin that connect all of the toes together. The flaps are hidden when the lizard walks on land. But when it is being chased by another animal that wants to eat it, the lizard heads straight for the water. It begins running fast while it is still on the land. Then, when it hits the water, it just keeps right on going—as if it was still walking on dirt. But there is one big difference. When the lizard's feet hit the water, the webs between its toes open up kind of like an umbrella or a parachute. This makes the lizard's feet much larger, and prevents it from sinking into the water—kind of like snow shoes on humans can keep people from sinking into deep snow drifts when they walk on the snow. Jesus lizards can run across water at a speed of 5 feet per second, and they can do this for a distance of about 15 feet before they sink into the water and begin swimming.

But **how** do they do it? Is it a miracle, like when Jesus walked on the water? No, it's not a **miracle**. It's **physics**. Let me explain. A basilisk lizard generates various forces with its hind feet—forces that are so strong that they keep the lizard's body on the surface of the water and in an upright position. As the lizard moves across the water, its stride is divided into three distinct phases, which are known as the **slap phase**, the **stroke phase**, and the **recovery phase**. During the slap phase, the lizard's foot moves **straight down**—just like a piston moves straight down in a car's engine to generate force to make the car move. In this phase, the lizard's foot "slaps" the water, which moves the water away from the lizard's foot while creating a pocket of air that surrounds the foot. The amount of force generated by the slap phase is enough to keep the lizard's body on the water's surface long enough for its foot to enter the stroke phase. During the stroke phase, the lizard's foot moves **backward**—just like your foot moves backward as you finish taking

a step. It is during this phase that the lizard pushes itself forward by kicking its back leg through the water. Then, during the recovery phase, the lizard's foot moves **up and out of the water** so it can return to the starting position to get ready for the lizard's next step on the water.

During these three different phases, the lizards must generate forces that are strong enough to keep them from sinking in the water. To understand how important this is, think of humans trying to walk on deep snow drifts. The people cannot walk or run if they are sinking in the snow—because the snow slows them down too much. The same principle applies to the lizard. It cannot walk or run on the water if it's sinking in the water, because the water slows it down too much. Also, humans are able to stay on top of snow because snow is firm. But it is much harder for the Jesus lizard to stay on top of the water because water is a soft, squishy surface.

There is another problem for the lizard, however. Imagine that you were riding a bicycle. What would happen if you suddenly stopped pedaling? You would stop moving and fall over! In order to keep the bicycle from falling over, you have to keep pedaling so you can keep moving. The same is true of the Jesus lizard. It has to continue to carry out the slap, stroke, and recovery phases with its hind feet so that it can keep moving. If it stops producing these forces, it will sink in the water. Another amazing feature of the basilisk lizard is that it not only can **run on the water**, but it also can **swim in the water**. So, when the lizard wants to stop running on top of the water, all it has to do is stop producing the forces with its feet, which allows it to sink in the water. When it does that, it ducks its head and begins to swim furiously.

Stop and think about all of this. For the lizard to be able to run on the water, it has to have webbed feet that can act like the piston in a car. At the same time, the lizard's legs must be able to move forward and backward like the legs of a human riding a bicycle. Plus, the lizard has to have a brain that can tell its body how to do all of these things at the same time. And, last but not least, it has to be a fantastic swimmer!

Scientists who do not believe in God tell us that the Jesus lizard's amazing features "just happened by accident." But I'm not buying it. It was no accident that Jesus Christ walked on the water of the Sea of Galilee. He did that by the power of God. And it is no accident that the Jesus lizard can run on water. He, too, does that by the power of God because God created the lizard with a special ability that no other animal has. King David said in Psalm 139:14, "I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvelous are your works—something that my soul knows very well." Yes, we humans are "fearfully and wonderfully made." But we aren't the only part of God's creation that is. There are many creatures on the Earth that are "fearfully and wonderfully made." The basilisk lizard is just one of them. In Mark 7:37, the people said of Jesus, "He has done all things well." When God and Jesus created the world, as Genesis 1:1 tells us that they did, they really did "do all things well." Who could believe that the amazing design we see all around us could have "just happened by accident"? Like I said, I'm not buying it. And I don't think you should either.