

Dragons

There are many verses in the Bible that refer to dragons. Sometimes dragons are used symbolically. For example, the book of Revelation tells us that one day a dragon will invade the world:

Revelation 12:3-4: “And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.”

The reason we can tell that this is definitely a symbolic dragon is because a few verses later we're told that this dragon is actually the devil:

Revelation 12:9: “And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”

However, there are far *more* passages that refer to dragons as actual animals. For example, take a look at these verses:

Job 30:29: “I am a brother to dragons (#8577), and a companion to owls.”

Isaiah 43:20: “The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons (#8577) and the owls:

because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen.”

Job wasn't saying that he had become the companion of a mythical animal that didn't exist. Likewise, Isaiah wasn't saying that God was going to be honored by a mythical creature! Instead they both believed that dragons (Strong's #8577) were every bit as real as owls.

In Psalm 91, the psalmist believed that dragons were as real as lions:

Psalm 91:13: “Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon (#8577) shalt thou trample under feet.”

Dragons are even commanded to praise the Lord:

Psalm 148:7: “Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons (#8577), and all deeps”

Strong's #8577 (“tannin”) is translated a couple different ways in the King James Bible. In Genesis 1:21 it's translated as “great whales”:

Genesis 1:21: “And God created great whales (#8577), and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.”

In Exodus 7:9 it's translated as “serpent”:

Exodus 7:9: “When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it

before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent (#8577).”

However, the vast majority of the time Strong's #8577 translated as dragon. We're told that dragons lived in the sea:

Psalms 74:13: “Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the dragons (#8577) in the waters.”

It seems that dragons also lived in desolate places such as ruined buildings and cities (which indicates this sea creature could also spend time on land):

Isaiah 13:22: “And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons (#8577) in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.”

Isaiah 34:13: “And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof: and it shall be an habitation of dragons (#8577), and a court for owls.”

Jeremiah 9:11: “And I will make Jerusalem heaps, and a den of dragons (#8577); and I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.”

Jeremiah 10:22: “Behold, the noise of the bruit is come, and a great commotion out of the north country, to make the cities of Judah desolate, and a den of dragons (#8577).”

Jeremiah 49:33: “And Hazer shall be a dwelling

for dragons (#8577), and a desolation for ever: there shall no man abide there, nor any son of man dwell in it.”

Jeremiah 51:37: “And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwellingplace for dragons (#8577), an astonishment, and an hissing, without an inhabitant.”

We're also told that dragons made a terrible wailing sound, which is seems the prophet Micah was familiar with:

Micah 1:8: “Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked: I will make a wailing like the dragons (#8577), and mourning as the owls.”

Dragons also had a reputation for swallowing large things whole:

Jeremiah 51:34: “Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a dragon (#8577), he hath filled his belly with my delicates, he hath cast me out.”

Jeremiah compared the way that wild donkeys sniffed the wind to dragons, who apparently did the same thing:

Jeremiah 14:6: “And the wild asses did stand in the high places, they snuffed up the wind like dragons (#8577); their eyes did fail, because there was no grass.”

Now, I realize that while the King James Bible translates

Strong's #8577 as dragons, other translations do not. For example, in Job 30:29 many translations use “jackals” instead.

I believe that the other translations are very wrong, and the King James Bible is correct. As we've seen, the animal referred to in Strong's #8577 *lives in the sea*. Do jackals live in the sea? No, they do not. There's one verse which not only tells us that this creature lives in the sea, but also gives us a very important clue about what this animal really is. It can be found in the book of Isaiah:

Isaiah 27:1: “In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon (#8577) that is in the sea.”

In this passage we're told that the dragon has another very famous name, and it's *leviathan*. God has quite a lot to say about *that* particular animal! In fact, an entire chapter of the Bible is dedicated to it. That chapter is Job 41. There's enough information in that chapter to prove that the leviathan was a genuine, fire-breathing dragon – and it really existed.

First, God tells us that the leviathan was an incredibly dangerous animal:

Job 41:1-6: “Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down? Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn? Will he make many supplications unto thee? will he speak soft words unto thee? Will he make a covenant with thee? wilt thou take him for a servant for ever? Wilt thou play with him as with a bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens? Shall the companions make a banquet of him? shall they part him among the

merchants?”

The leviathan was so dangerous that there was simply no way to catch it. That isn't true of jackals, but it was true of dragons. God said that those who tried to fight this creature were doomed to fail. The leviathan was so terrifying that no one dared to wage war against it:

Job 41:7-10: “Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons? or his head with fish spears? Lay thine hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more. Behold, the hope of him is in vain: shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him? None is so fierce that dare stir him up: who then is able to stand before me?”

The point God is making in this chapter is that the leviathan was a terrifying, fire-breathing creature which was impossible to defeat in battle. There was no way to overcome it – and yet God was the one who made it and He could defeat it with ease. If people were terrified of the leviathan (which they were), then they should fear God even more. God was using this creature (which He made) to glorify Himself.

The leviathan wasn't a mythical animal. It was a real creature that Job was familiar with, which apparently still existed in his day. It had terrible teeth and airtight scales:

Job 41:14-17: “Who can open the doors of his face? his teeth are terrible round about. His scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal. One is so near to another, that no air can come between them. They are joined one to another, they stick together, that they cannot be sundered.”

For the record, jackals don't have scales.

The leviathan also breathed fire, which is another thing that jackals don't do:

Job 41:18-21: “By his neesings a light doth shine, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning. Out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out. Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething pot or caldron. His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth.”

The word “neesings” means “to sneeze”. Smoke went out of its nostrils and a flame went out of its mouth. Its breath was so hot that it *set things on fire!* The leviathan was a real fire-breathing dragon. They actually did exist in the ancient world.

But there's more. Its heart was as solid and hard as a rock:

Job 41:24: “His heart is as firm as a stone; yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone.”

God said that the leviathan was so terrifying that when it rose up, even the strongest warriors peed themselves:

Job 41:25: “When he raiseth up himself, the mighty are afraid: by reason of breakings they purify themselves.”

The leviathan was impossible to defeat. The weapons of the ancient world were useless against it. They couldn't even penetrate its skin:

Job 41:26-29: “The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold: the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon. He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make him flee: slingstones are turned with him into

stubble. Darts are counted as stubble: he laugheth at the shaking of a spear.”

In movies the underbelly of a dragon is said to be its weak point. In reality the leviathan didn't have any weak points. Even its underbelly was sharp and dangerous:

Job 41:30: “Sharp stones are under him: he spreadeth sharp pointed things upon the mire.”

Every part of this animal was a threat. It was immensely strong, it was immune to the weapons of the ancient world, its skin was impenetrable, its heart was as solid as a rock, and it breathed fire. It's no wonder even the strongest warrior was terrified of it! There was no way they were going to win a conflict with it. The ancients just didn't have high-caliber weapons or long-range missiles to fight it with.

The breath of the leviathan was so hot that it actually made the sea boil:

Job 41:31: “He maketh the deep to boil like a pot: he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment.”

When it swam in the water, it was easy to see because it left behind a trail of light:

Job 41:32: “He maketh a path to shine after him; one would think the deep to be hoary.”

The word “hoary” means white. The leviathan didn't have to hide because there was no other creature like it. He was at the top of the food chain:

Job 41:33-34: “Upon earth there is not his like, who is made without fear. He beholdeth all high things: he is a king over all the children of

pride.”

The leviathan feared nothing, because nothing could pose any danger to it. This amazing creature was the undisputed king of the animal kingdom.

In Job 41 God used the leviathan to show Job how great God was and how small Job was. To do this God used a real animal that Job was both familiar with and terrified of. As great and mighty as the leviathan was, God was infinitely greater. Job needed to understand that he was in no position to claim to be greater than God. Job wasn't even greater than the leviathan, which was one of God's creatures.

The Bible refers to dragons many times. They were real creatures that existed in the ancient world. The reason so many cultures around the world have stories about dragons is because at one point they actually existed, and people encountered them (and were terrified of them). It's true that they're no longer around today, but neither are a great many other animals that we can find in the fossil record.

It's entirely possible that there are the bones of dragons in museums around the world, which simply haven't been identified as a dragon. Keep in mind that there are a lot of things that bones don't tell us. The bones of a dinosaur aren't going to tell us if the animal once breathed fire, or if its heart was as hard as a stone. That information will be lost.

How do we know that dragons were real? Because we have the account of God Himself, who made them and who told us about them. The Bible contains many references to them, which tell us about people who encountered them over the span of hundreds of years. Real dragons were far more powerful and dangerous than what we see in movies.

One important point to note is that the Bible depicts dragons as a *sea creature*. Although it seems to be capable of being out of the water, it isn't a land animal and it doesn't fly. There's no evidence that the leviathan had wings.

However, the Bible does refer to something called a “fiery

flying serpent”:

Isaiah 14:29: “Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina, because the rod of him that smote thee is broken: for out of the serpent’s root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent (#8314).”

Isaiah 30:6: “The burden of the beasts of the south: into the land of trouble and anguish, from whence come the young and old lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent (#8314), they will carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the bunches of camels, to a people that shall not profit them.”

The word here is Strong’s #8314 (“seraph”). This word appears 7 times in the Old Testament. The Israelites encountered it during their time in the wilderness:

Numbers 21:6-8: “And the Lord sent fiery serpents (#8314) among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent (#8314), and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.”

Deuteronomy 8:15: “Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents (#8314), and scorpions, and

drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;"

That same word also appears in Isaiah 6. In that passage it refers to a mysterious angelic creature known as the seraphim:

Isaiah 6:2: "Above it stood the seraphims (#8314): each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

Isaiah 6:6 "Then flew one of the seraphims (#8314) unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:"

It seems "seraph" comes from "saraph" (Strongs #8313), which means "burning". Since we know that God did create the leviathan as a genuine fire-breathing animal, it's possible that the "fiery flying serpent" is exactly what it seems: a flying serpent that breathed fire. Perhaps there was more than one type of dragon in the ancient world.

There is a bit of good news in all of this. At the very end of the Bible we're told that after this universe comes to an end, God is going to make a new one:

Revelation 21:1: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."

I believe the new heaven and earth will be a restored version of this universe – one in which there will be no pain, or suffering, or death. If that is indeed the case, and God is going to restore what's been lost, then this new universe will contain animals that are now extinct. That means one day the righteous

will get to encounter the leviathan and the fiery flying serpent – not as threats, but as amazing wonders of God.