

For the very last stop of their whirlwind tour of the country, Matt and Tiffany visit a worldclass dinosaur excavation site in Wyoming.



**Discussion Leader:** Dr. Stan Hudson was a geology major at the University of California at Riverside before becoming a Christian. He then shifted his studies to theology, eventually earning a Doctor of Ministry degree at Fuller Theological Seminary. Today he combines both interests, co-hosting the weekly radio program “Sink the Beagle,” a light-hearted approach to creationism and evolution issues. He currently pastors two churches in the university towns of Moscow, Idaho and Pullman, Washington.

It may not be the most important of origins subjects, but it’s certainly the most popular; and we saved it for our last program: dinosaurs! It was with the discovery of more and more dinosaur bones in the 1800s that helped fuel the debates on origins. And, as host Stan Hudson points out at the program’s end, creationists didn’t have good answers back then. However, it was hoped that today’s program would help some.

### 1 QUESTION:

Everyone has favorite dinosaurs. Do you remember which one was Tiffany’s favorite?

### ANSWER:

The brontosaurus. The problem with that is that there is no such animal! It was a mistake made by Othniel Marsh when bones of two different dinosaurs, the camarasaurus (the skull) and the apatosaurus (the body) were combined into one huge mounted skeleton. These were displayed in the Smithsonian for many decades under the title of brontosaurus...and the name stuck! Tiffany probably meant “the big kind of dinosaurs” as her favorite.

### 2 QUESTION:

Can you remember Matt’s favorite? If you know, you really are a dinosaur fan!

### ANSWER:

The ankylosaurus. This is the kind with the spiked back and the club-tail.



### DEFINITION:

**DINOSAUR**—A superorder classification for a group of reptiles named by Sir Richard Owen (a British creationist) in 1842. The term comes from two Greek words which mean “awesome reptile.” The Bible doesn’t have such a recent term in it, but does describe the creation of “tannim,” great sea creatures, in Genesis 1:21 on creation week’s fifth day. This word is rendered sometimes as “snake” or “reptile” later in the Old Testament. Some people think the Leviathan and (especially) the Behemoth of Job were dinosaurs, though this seems unlikely. Whatever God created was “very good;” but by the time of the Flood, the animal world had degenerated. God’s judgment on the serpent (Genesis 3:14; Romans 8:19-23) suggests that all animals would feel the effects of sin in the form of physical degradation (the serpent went from a tree dweller to a ground crawler). If God created great reptiles as part of a perfect creation (a reasonable assumption), those destroyed at the Flood might represent a degraded form (which are the ones we find fossilized).



**3 QUESTION:**

Dr. Lee Spencer at the dinosaur dig site reminded us of the three layers (“periods”) of the Mesozoic Era that contain dinosaur bones. Let’s see if you can remember them. Try to put them in order (from the deepest layer upward).

**ANSWER:**

The Triassic, the Jurassic and the Cretaceous Periods. The latter is where most dinosaurs are found, The movie “Jurassic Park” had almost entirely Cretaceous dinosaurs in it!

**4 QUESTION:**

Dr. Art Chadwick, the director of the dig, mentioned that dinosaurs appeared to have lived in ecosystems that were much different than man’s. In fact, they’ve only found tiny mammal fossils around them. Why is this significant for either origins model?

**ANSWER:**

For the standard model of evolution, man’s remains aren’t found with dinosaurs because they lived in different ages. For the alternative creationist model, man’s remains aren’t found with dinosaurs because the habitat is wrong for man...plus, who would want to build villages in dinosaur habitats?

**5 QUESTION:**

As both Chadwick and Spencer pointed out, the Wyoming site is where the very last dinosaurs were covered up. Dinosaur remains are not found at higher levels. Are these last bones found in complete skeletons?

**ANSWER:**

No, they are found “disarticulated.” That is, they are disconnected. They were also found in graded beds, with heavy bones at the bottom and lighter bones at the top. This suggests they were washed/rolled in from some other place where they had been killed. Both standard and alternative models believe that dinosaurs were made extinct by a great catastrophe.

**6 QUESTION:**

What was the most common dinosaur found at the dig site?

**ANSWER:**

The two-legged duckbill dinosaur called “edmontosaurus.” They reached more than 30 feet in length. And the deposit is estimated to contain *tens of thousands* of these creatures’ remains.

**7 QUESTION:**

Dr. Spencer joked that some people have believed over the years that there never were any such creatures as dinosaurs! He added, they “can come and look here” as they were being dug out of the ground. Is it true that some have disbelieved that dinosaurs existed?

**ANSWER:**

Unfortunately, yes...and by creationists who thought it was either a conspiracy by secular scientists or by the devil himself to cause people to believe less in the Bible!

**8 QUESTION:**

Art Chadwick spoke of the Book of Job as mentioning the animals *leviathan* and *behemoth*, which some have thought to be dinosaurs, though this is disputed. Is there Biblical support for dinosaurs?

**ANSWER:**

The word “dinosaur” does not appear in the Bible, since it’s a comparatively new term. But “great sea creatures” were created by God on the fourth day of creation week. The word for sea creature is sometimes translated as serpent or reptile. God could have created great reptiles, which were degraded as a result of sin. Remember, the serpent (which Satan took the form of) was especially predicted that it would degrade (from tree dweller to dirt crawler).

### 9 QUESTION:

Dr. Elaine Kennedy mentioned that the first dinosaurs were found in the upper Triassic Period. She also stated that they were found “suddenly” at that level in all parts of the world. Why is this significant to our debate?

#### ANSWER:

It seems odd that such distinctive creatures suddenly evolved in all parts of the planet at the same time. One might expect them to start somewhere and *then* spread to other regions. However, if the alternative model is used, one would expect the fossils to be a record of simply where great populations of animals were killed and buried. This model is more consistent with the evidence.



### 10 QUESTION:

Lee Spencer and Matt really got into a discussion about data and interpretation. Over and over Matt expressed the thought that the data overwhelmingly supports the standard model. Meanwhile Dr. Spencer tried to make the point that data and interpretation of data were two separate things. What example did he use?

#### ANSWER:

The Potassium-Argon dating method. The *data* says there is so much potassium, so much argon in the rock. The *interpretation* (from the standard model) says that means the rock is \_\_\_ years old.

#### DEFINITION:

**THEORY**—In scientific usage, a model that can explain and predict future occurrences, like the theory of gravity or relativity. The theory of evolution is accepted as fact by most scientists, a model that explains many observations.

### 11 QUESTION:

In the middle of that discussion Dr. Spencer said something that you wouldn’t normally expect a scientist to say: “I don’t have an open mind!” That is, he believes in the Bible and the accounts in Genesis on origins. With that model in place, he then looks at the data. It’s his bias. Is this unusual in science or not?

#### ANSWER:

As Dr. Spencer pointed out, *all* scientists operate from their worldviews and prejudices. It affects the questions they ask of the data. For example, one wouldn’t look for Flood evidence there in Wyoming had they not thought the Biblical Flood happened in the first place.

### 12 QUESTION:

Matt countered with the Bible is not a “book of science.” But he was then challenged with “are you just trying to make the Bible fit your worldview?” This is probably one of the biggest issues of all: how do we get two totally different views of origins to agree?

#### ANSWER:

You really can’t, and that’s the problem! Either you downgrade your view of the Bible into a book of moral teachings, but false in its views of history (what actually happened) OR you assume the worldviews of modern scientists keep them from seeing God in nature and their interpretations therefore are not right. There is no logical middle ground.



**13** QUESTION:

Dr. Elaine Kennedy points out that wherever dinosaur fossils are found there is evidence of water deposition. Her worldview allows her to come to what conclusion from that data?

**ANSWER:**

That the Bible accurately describes the destruction of dinosaurs when God said He would destroy all animals who “drew breath;” that is, those animals who were air breathing. And He used water.



**14** QUESTION:

Back to the big discussion (argument?)...! Dr. Spencer expressed the surprising belief that science *does* get into “religious beliefs.” He used the illustration of the belief in parallel universes and particle physics...and that even though science can’t prove them, this doesn’t stop scientists believing in them. Then came the even more surprising statement, “You can believe in any religion except Christianity.” What did he mean?

**ANSWER:**

There exists in much of modern science a prejudice against Christianity and belief in the Bible, seeing in it a challenge to their models and view of what is truth. There is a history to this—see program #2.

**15** QUESTION:

Matt wanted to know why he couldn’t be in God and evolution. He said he needs a “model that works” scientifically and that the model of evolution “is successful.” Is this a reasonable statement?

**ANSWER:**

What Spencer was trying to teach Matt was that just because a majority believes something doesn’t mean that thing is true. As he had said earlier, “Science has built a façade of objectivity.” But scientists do have prejudices, which affect their questions and their conclusions. If you start with the premise that all things came into being through natural law, then evolution is a model that is the best available. And it does explain many things...but not all. It is therefore “successful.” But the alternate model also has a lot of data to support it (although it is held by a minority of scientists), and it appears reasonable/successful to many thoughtful people.

**After they were done with the series Tiffany, Matt and Paul sat down and discussed where their journey (of thirteen locations) had taken them. They reflected on what they had learned and how they had been changed. Both Matt and Tiffany enjoyed the experience, feeling that their spiritual experiences were stronger. Tiffany felt her faith was stronger. Matt loved the mental exercises. Both agreed it was healthy to have asked the questions that came up. Matt said he admired the bravery of the scientists they had met to step out in isolation from their peers because of their beliefs. This was indeed a journey for these two young scholars.**

**It was our hope that you also would travel this same journey with them and ask the big questions they did...and to find satisfying answers for your own faith. What answers did you find on this journey? What questions do you still have? How will you live with unanswered questions?**