

“Behemoth” And “Leviathan” #2

After exploring in last week's bulletin what the “Behemoth” and “Leviathan” were, and considering if they were figurative, we will now turn our attention to whether they can be identified as commonly known animals today.

Was “Behemoth” A Hippo?

We think not! First of all, think how weak a hippo makes God look. God describes “Behemoth” as, “He is the first of the ways of God; Only He who made him can bring near His sword” (Job 40:19). Can we think of a hippopotamus being the first of the ways of God? That seems ludicrous to ascribe such a lofty title to such a tubby and round creature. Furthermore, only God can bring the sword near and prevail.

Second, God speaks of him as moving “his tail like a cedar” (v. 17). When the world displays a hippo who can move his tail like a cedar tree, we will consider such a position! A hippo has a tail like a “stick” not a cedar tree. How does a cedar move? We can understand it swaying with the wind. The “Behemoth” had a tail that moved like the swaying of a cedar tree. Folks, let's face it, a hippo has no such thing. Anything else is a tale of fabrication and a figment of fiction!

Finally, he is confident in a raging river even if it gushes into his mouth and takes it into his eyes or is pierced in the nose with a snare (vv. 23-24). Can it be said of a hippo that he is confident in a raging and gushing river? Can it be said of a hippo that he is confident even when he is pierced in the nose with a snare?

Was “Leviathan” A Crocodile?

One has as much authority to believe that “Leviathan” is a crocodile as one does to believe the creation week consisted of billions of years, or that the “singing” in Ephesians 5:19 accompanies mechanical instruments. Here are some reasons why Leviathan never was nor ever will be a crocodile.

One, “Behold, your expectation is false; will you be laid low [“cast down”, KJV; “overwhelmed”, NKJV] even at the sight of him?” (Job 41:9, NASB). Does a crocodile have that effect on a person? Does the very sight of a crocodile make cast us down?

Two, “When he raises himself up the mighty are afraid; because of his crashings they are beside themselves” (Job 41:25). How high does a crocodile rise? He does not raise himself up much higher than a serpent who crawls on his belly! Can we describe a crocodile as one that rises and frightens the mighty with his “crashings”? If a crocodile could make crashings, would it crash enough to make the mighty beside themselves or bewildered?

Three, “His undersides are like sharp potsherds; He spreads pointed marks in the mire” (Job 41:30). We have all seen men wrestle alligators and crocodiles. When they turn crocodiles over and expose their “undersides,” do we see sharp potsherds? Is it not

rather smooth? When a crocodile goes through mire, does it leave pointed marks?
Only if it is upside down!

Four, "He makes the deep boil like a pot; He makes the sea like a pot of ointment. He leaves a shining wake behind him; one would think the deep had white hair" (Job 41:31-32). Have you ever seen a crocodile go out into the deep blue sea and make it boil? Would his wake make you think the deep has white hair? Again, we must answer in the negative.

Five, "Out of his mouth go burning lights; sparks of fire shoot out. Smoke goes out of his nostrils, as from a boiling pot and burning rushes. His breath kindles coals and a flame goes out of his mouth" (Job 41:19-21). Perhaps this is one reason why people are apprehensive to embrace "Leviathan" being literal. But again, why would "Behemoth" be literal and "Leviathan" figurative? There is presently living in our world a unique beetle called the bombardier beetle which could have a similar mechanism to that of the "Leviathan." In speaking about the bombardier beetle's noxious gas blast, Duane T. Gish, Ph.D. writes:

The chemicals and catalysts react to form another chemical, called quinone, which is very irritating. All of this happens extremely quickly in the bombardier beetle's combustion tubes ... scientists using special high-speed cameras have recorded both audible pops and puffs of smoke when the bombardier beetle sprays. They have also discovered that some species emit sprays in violent pulses at the rate of 500 per second.

The point is easily understood. If a 1/2 inch beetle can protect itself with such a display of force, imagine what a several ton dinosaur could do with a similar mechanism. No wonder Jehovah says of this mighty and terrifying creature, "On earth there is nothing like him, which is made without fear. He beholds every high thing; he is king over all the children of pride" (Job 40:33-34). "Leviathan" is also mentioned outside of Job, showing that he was alive and well during the prophets (Psalm 74:14; 104:25-26; Isaiah 27:1).

Adapted from Steven J. Wallace