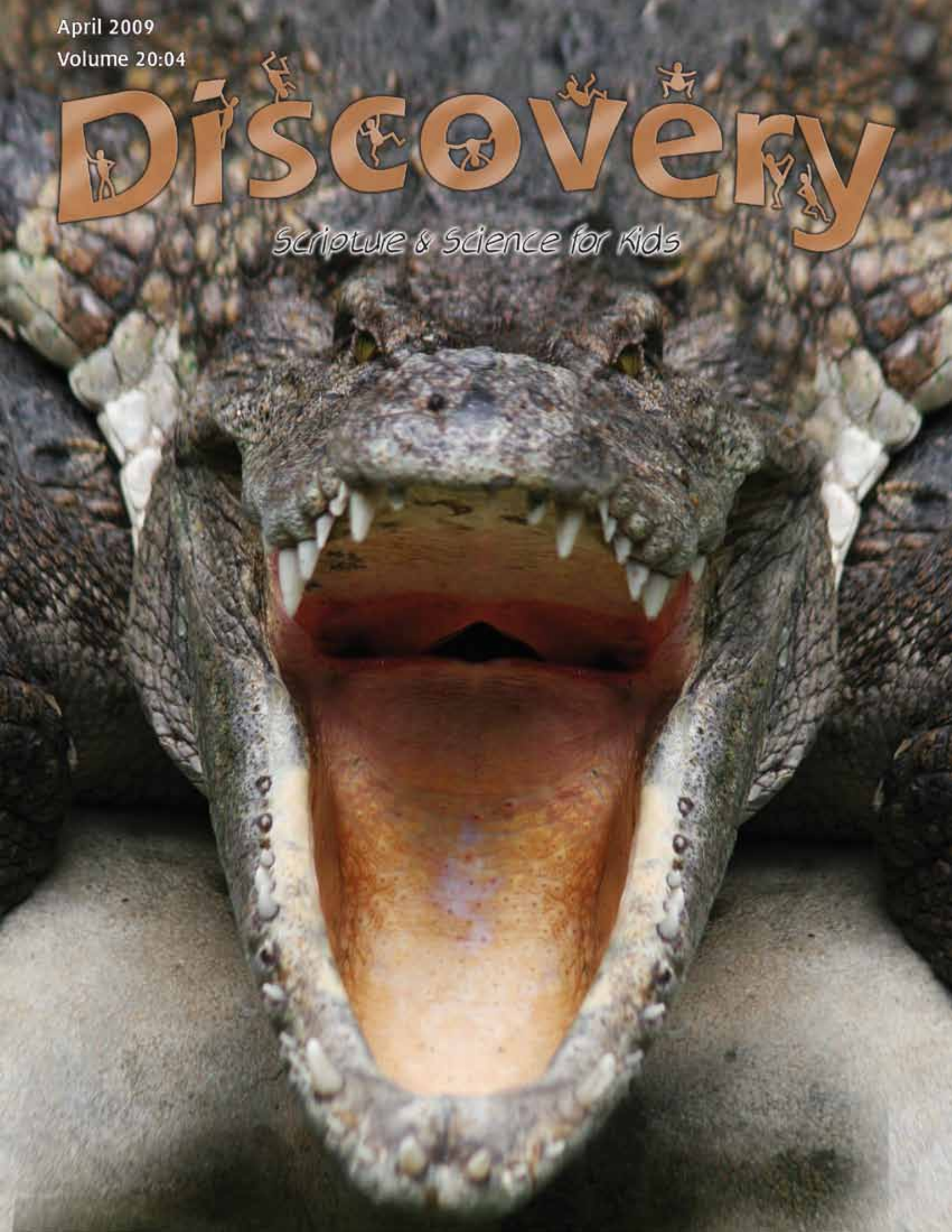


April 2009

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# Discovery

*Scripture & Science for Kids*



# God's AMAZING REPTILES

KYLE BUTT

**Have you ever heard stories about huge snakes that can swallow pigs whole?** Maybe you have seen pictures of massive sea turtles that can grow to be almost 10 feet long and weigh over 2,000 pounds. Or you might have seen a television program about huge saltwater crocodiles that can grow to be 20 feet long and weigh almost 2,500 pounds. If you have read, heard, or studied about turtles, crocodiles, snakes, and lizards, than you know about reptiles.

Reptiles are a special group of God's amazing creatures that have very unique characteristics. All reptiles have scales. This feature separates them from other groups such as mammals, which have hair, and birds with feathers. Another group of animals known as amphibians, like frogs and salamanders, sometimes looks like reptiles. But amphibians do not have scales and they are not reptiles.

Most reptiles are cold-blooded. That means that their body temperature changes as the outside temperature changes. You will rarely see a reptile on a cold, snowy day, because the cold weather causes the reptile to have a cold body temperature. The cold causes the animal to move very slowly. In fact, during the cold winter months, reptiles like snakes or lizards find underground dens where they stay warm. Sometimes as many as a hundred snakes can be found in the same den.

Reptiles can be divided into four basic groups: turtles, lizards, snakes, and crocodiles. Of these four groups, the largest reptiles alive are crocodiles. The largest crocodiles in the world are called saltwater crocodiles. Many of them live in Australia. An average saltwater crocodile is about 17 feet long and weighs about 1,500 pounds, although some grow more than 20 feet long and can weigh almost 2,500 pounds.



**SALTWATER CROCODILES** have a heavy set jaw with between 64-68 teeth.

**Snakes are unique reptiles that do not have legs.** They crawl on their stomachs, using their stomach muscles and scales to move. Many snakes are venomous. They



have sharp, hollow teeth called fangs. When they bite another animal or a human, the fangs act as needles, injecting venom into the body of the victim. Other snakes are called constrictors. They use their strong, muscular bodies to wrap around prey and squeeze it to death.

The anaconda is one of the world's largest snakes. It can grow to be almost 30 feet long and can have a girth (the size of its "waist") of over 40 inches. That means an anaconda can be as big around as an adult man's waist. It has sharp teeth, but it does not have venom. It uses its massive body to squeeze the life out of its prey.

**Komodo dragons are the largest lizards alive today.**

They can grow to be 10 feet long and can weigh over 300 pounds. Komodo dragons can run extremely fast for short distances. They eat mostly dead animals (called carrion), but they will occasionally attack living animals like wild pigs or deer. One amazing thing about komodo dragons is the fact that they can eat up to 80% of their own body weight in one meal. That means that if a komodo dragon weighs 100 pounds at the beginning of a meal, it can weigh 180 pounds when it gets through eating.

**KOMODO DRAGONS** can eat up to 80% of their own body weight in one meal.



**Leatherback sea turtles are the largest turtles alive today.**

They can grow to be 10 feet long and can weigh up to 2,000 pounds. They are fast swimmers and spend most of their time in the ocean. They rarely come on land. When they do, it is usually to lay eggs.

When you begin to learn about reptiles on television, in books or magazines, or on the Internet, you will probably discover some things that are false. For instance, many of the resources that tell about reptiles say that they **evolved** over millions of years. Furthermore, we are often told that reptiles lived hundreds of millions of years ago,

but these things are not true.

Reptiles did not live hundreds of millions of years ago, nor did they evolve **from** other kinds of animals or **into** other kinds of animals. The Bible explains that God created reptiles on days five and six of the Creation week. The Bible also explains that the Earth has not been around for millions of years, but only for a few thousand years. The next time you see a huge crocodile or a massive anaconda, you can know that God created all the different kinds of animals in six days, including the amazing reptiles.



# "FEARFULLY GREAT REPTILES"

ERIC LYONS

Perhaps the most famous reptiles are those that no longer live on Earth. We call them dinosaurs. The word dinosaur comes from two Greek words: *deinos*, meaning "fearfully great," and *saurus*, meaning "reptile" or "lizard." Since 1842, when a scientist named Richard Owen invented the term, man has referred to certain extinct reptiles (known from the fossil record and history) as dinosaurs.

Certain dinosaurs were the longest and largest reptiles ever to roam the Earth. *Apatosaurus*, more popularly known as *Brontosaurus*, was taller than a giraffe, longer than four cars, and heavier than five large elephants. In 1986, scientists unearthed the remains of another large dinosaur they named *Seismosaurus*, meaning "earthquake lizard." Scientists estimated that when this reptile died, it was 120 feet long from head to tail.

The heaviest dinosaur ever known to have lived was discovered in Argentina in 1991. Scientists named the animal simply *Argentinosaurus*. Just one of its backbones, called a vertebra, measured five feet, while one of its rib bones was 14 feet long. Scientists estimate that *Argentinosaurus* reached a weight of over 100 tons (or 200,000 pounds)—as much as 55 average cars weigh!

Scientists are puzzled about how creatures this large could have eaten enough to survive. They are not even sure how such a large animal could pump blood up to its head. Those who believe in evolution wonder what caused dinosaurs to reach such giant sizes. The fact is, these interesting questions point us back to the amazing wisdom and power of God. Evolution didn't make *Seismosaurus*, *Argentinosaurus*, or any other reptiles from the past or present; God did! We can be sure that God neither had a problem feeding *Argentinosaurus* nor circulating its blood. Nothing is too hard for God (Jeremiah 32:17,27). "The Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and **all** that is them" (Exodus 20:11), including the dinosaurs and their habitat.



# The Bible, Reptiles, and Disease



KYLE BUTT

When I was a child, my brothers and I lived next to a pond. The pond had all kinds of fish and frogs in it. It also had lots of tiny paint turtles. My brothers and I found a way to catch the baby turtles and we began to sell them to our friends at school. I think we sold them for one dollar each, which was a really good price. But when the adults at school learned what we were doing, they told us we could not sell the turtles because turtles can carry a harmful bacteria called *Salmonella* (sal-muh-NELL-uh).

Reptiles such as turtles, snakes, and lizards are often carriers of *Salmonella*. They are called carriers because they have the bacteria in their stomachs and intestines, but the bacteria do not cause the reptiles to get sick. Unfortunately, the bacteria can cause humans to get sick. Many animals carry the bacteria, but reptiles carry it more often than most other animals. Since about nine out of 10 reptiles carry *Salmonella*, doctors recommend that houses where there are small children under five years old should not have reptiles as pets.

One way that *Salmonella* can get passed from a reptile to a human is if the lizard, turtle, or snake touches something that a person might put into his mouth. For instance, suppose a liz-

ard crawled on a kitchen counter. If that counter was used later to prepare food, the *Salmonella* might get on the food and cause sickness.

People in the Old Testament did not have microscopes to help them see bacteria. In fact, they did not know what *Salmonella* was or which animals often carried it. But God, who inspired the Bible, did know about bacteria. God gave Moses instructions about how to make sure that lizards and reptiles did not pass bacteria to the Israelites. In Leviticus 11:29-38, God called lizards and reptiles "unclean" animals. This meant that the Israelites could not eat them. Furthermore, God told Moses that if any of these reptiles touched anything, like a container that might have water or food in it, then that container had to be cleaned or thrown away (depending on what it was made of).

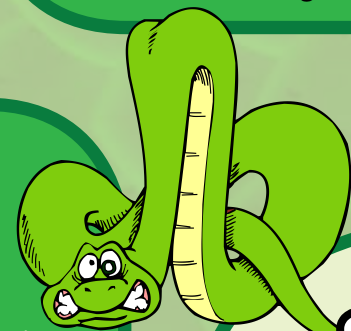
The instructions about lizards and reptiles in Leviticus help us know that the Bible is from God, since the people during Bible times did not know about *Salmonella* or other bacteria. The instructions also help us understand that God's rules are designed to help people be healthy and happy. And even though we are not under the Old Testament rules anymore, God's laws in the New Testament help us to be happy and show us how to get to heaven.

# ACTIVITY PAGES



## FILL IN THE BLANKS

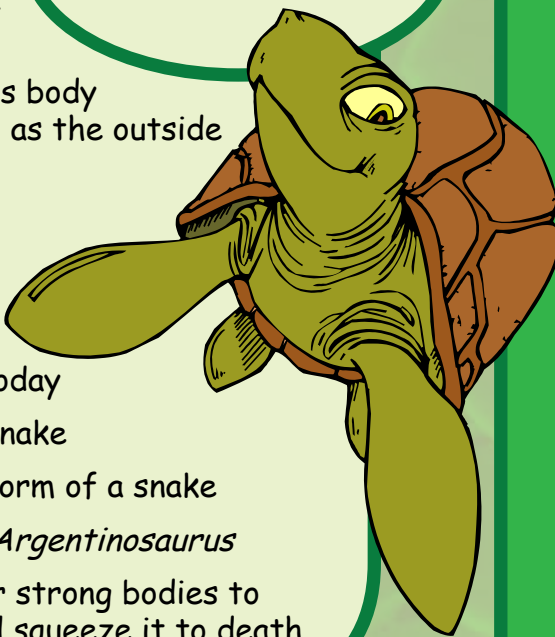
- All reptiles have \_\_\_\_\_.
- Most reptiles are \_\_\_\_\_-blooded.
- The word dinosaur comes from two Greek words: *deinos*, meaning "fearfully \_\_\_\_\_," and *saurus*, meaning "\_\_\_\_\_ " or "lizard."
- "The Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and \_\_\_\_\_ that is them" (Exodus 20:11).
- \_\_\_\_\_ is a harmful bacteria.



## ON A SEPARATE SHEET OF PAPER

- List the four basic groups of reptiles.
- Explain how God's instructions in the book of Leviticus about reptiles help us know that the Bible is from God.

## MATCHING

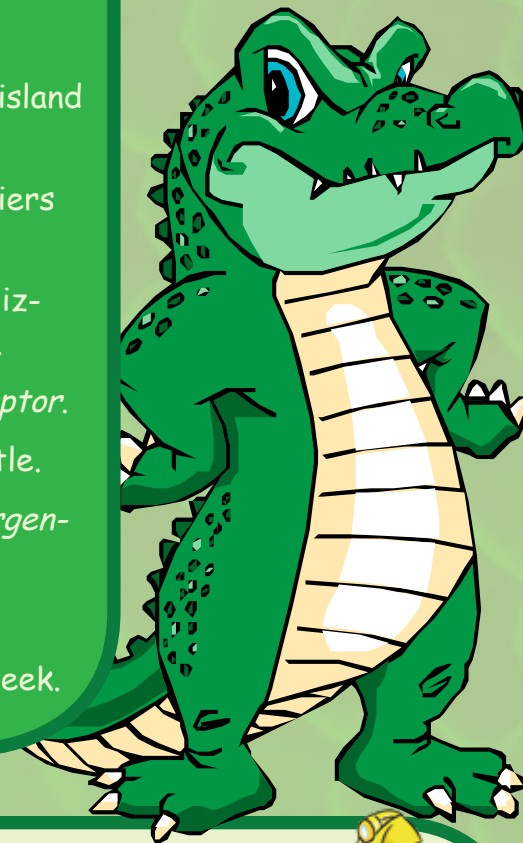


- \_\_\_\_\_ These animals sometimes look like reptiles, but do not have scales
- \_\_\_\_\_ Means that an animal's body temperature changes as the outside temperature changes
- \_\_\_\_\_ Have hair
- \_\_\_\_\_ Have feathers
- \_\_\_\_\_ Have scales
- \_\_\_\_\_ Largest lizard alive today
- \_\_\_\_\_ Another name for a snake
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spoke to Eve in the form of a snake
- \_\_\_\_\_ Extinct reptiles like *Argentinosaurus*
- \_\_\_\_\_ Snakes that use their strong bodies to wrap around prey and squeeze it to death

- |                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| A. Viper         | F. Reptiles     |
| B. Dinosaurs     | G. Mammals      |
| C. Satan         | H. Birds        |
| D. Constrictors  | I. Cold-blooded |
| E. Komodo Dragon | J. Amphibians   |



- ## TRUE OR FALSE
- Reptiles evolved over millions of years.
  - The "fiery serpents" mentioned in the Old Testament most likely refer to snakes that were on fire.
  - The apostle Paul died after being bitten by a snake on the island of Malta.
  - Reptiles such as turtles, snakes, and lizards are often carriers of *Salmonella*.
  - God gave Moses instructions about how to make sure that lizards and reptiles did not pass *Salmonella* to the Israelites.
  - The heaviest dinosaur ever known to have lived was *Velociraptor*.
  - The most common reptile mentioned in the Bible is the turtle.
  - We can be sure that God neither had a problem feeding *Argentinosaurus* nor circulating its blood.
  - About nine out of 10 reptiles carry *Salmonella*.
  - God created reptiles on days five and six of the Creation week.



## Dear Digger Doug,

Are diamondback snakes related to other rattlesnakes?  
—Cheyenne, Albuquerque, NM

Dear Cheyenne,

I am glad you sent this fine question. Evolutionists teach that all animals descended from a common ancestor and are related. Evolutionists think that all life comes from an original, single cell. This idea is false for a number of reasons, one of which is that the Law of Biogenesis states that animals reproduce after their own kind (cats have kittens, dogs have puppies, cows have calves, etc.). Animals do not evolve into other kinds of animals.

Diamondback snakes are very interesting. Taxonomists (scientists who group animals) say that the diamondback, along with the other rattlesnakes, is part of a group of poisonous snakes known as "pit vipers." The western diamondback is one of about 100 species that have a special pit organ, between the nostril and the eyes, which helps the snake find warm-blooded prey, such as rodents. When scientists say that these snakes are related, they mean that the snakes have similarities, and probably have descended from similar snakes. Remember, small changes within kinds of animals do happen, but snakes **stay** snakes.





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Editor: Kyle Butt, M.A.  
 Associate Editor: Eric Lyons, M.Min.  
 Layout and Design: Rob Baker, M.Ed.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

# REPTILES AND THE BIBLE

ERIC LYONS

The reptile most often mentioned in the Bible is the very one that gives many of us the creeps—the snake. Depending on the translation of the Bible you are using, snakes may be called serpents, adders, asps, or vipers. The first snake specifically mentioned in Scripture appears in Genesis chapter three, when Adam and Eve were still living in the Garden of Eden. The Bible says that Satan appeared to the first couple as a serpent. Similar to how God allowed the prophet Balaam’s donkey to speak to him “with a man’s voice” (Numbers 22:28,30; 2 Peter 2:16), Satan spoke to Eve through the form of a snake.

Centuries later, after the Lord delivered the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, God’s people wandered in a “great and terrible wilderness, in which were **fiery serpents**” (Deuteronomy 8:15). “Fiery serpents” most likely refers to venomous snakes whose bites caused swelling and death in humans. In fact, at one point during Israel’s wilderness wanderings, as punishment for their impience and complaining, “the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died” (Numbers 21:6).

After a violent shipwreck, the apostle Paul and the rest of those on board the ship escaped to the island

of Malta. Paul then helped gather sticks for a fire in order to get warm. After placing his bundle of sticks on the fire, a viper (venomous snake) “came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand” (Acts 28:3). The Bible describes the creature as “hanging from his hand” (Acts 28:4). Amazingly, Paul simply “shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm” (Acts 28:5). Why was Paul not hurt? Because the Lord was with him in a special way. Years earlier, Jesus had promised that some would “take up serpents” without fear of being harmed (read Mark 16:16-18).

Although the Bible mentions a few other reptiles (Leviticus 11:29-30), including the mighty fire-breathing leviathan (Job 41), the most common one was the slithering snake.



## ANSWERS

TRUE OR FALSE: 1. F; 2. F; 3. F; 4. T; 5. T; 6. F; 7. F; 8. T; 9. T; 10. T.  
 MATCHING: 1. J (Amphibians); 2. I (Cold-blooded); 3. G (Mammals); 4. H (Birds); 5. F (Reptiles); 6. E (Komodo Dragon); 7. A (Viper); 8. C (Satan); 9. B (Dinosaur); 10. D (Constrictor).  
 FILL IN THE BLANKS: 1. scales; 2. cold; 3. great; 4. all; 5. *Salmonella*.  
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