



Blackfoot

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The Bible And Unicorns

By Tommy Thornhill

What are your thoughts when someone mentions “unicorns?” I imagine most immediately think of a fictional horse-like creature with a horn protruding from its forehead, maybe also with wings to help it fly. Over the years we have read of this animal in children’s story books and seen it portrayed in movies, cartoons, paintings, etc. Our modern dictionaries define the unicorn as “a mythical creature, an animal generally depicted with the body and head of a horse, the hind legs of a stag, the tail of a lion, and a single horn in the middle of the forehead.” This is the image I used to think of when someone mentioned an “unicorn.” But now I think differently. Let me tell you why.

A few months ago, while reading email articles posted on my computer, I was surprised to come across an article entitled written by Nathan Hoffman, entitled, “Why Does the Bible Mention Unicorns?” The article was interesting enough that I printed it off so I could save it to study more carefully. It was evident that Nathan had made considerable research on “unicorns,” and the evidence he presented made me realize that unicorns were mentioned in the Bible and are still living today.

Please understand that much of what I am now writing on this subject is not original with me. It is from information gleaned from Nathan’s article which I believe to be valid. Study with me as I present some things I learned from Nathan’s article.

First of all, understand that modern translations of the Bible do not mention “unicorns.” When I started preaching, I used the ASV, then after a few years switched to the NKJV which I continue to use today. Neither of these version ever used the term “unicorn.” But, after reading Nathan Hoffman’s article I learned that I had overlooked the fact that the word “unicorn” appears in the OT of the KJV nine times. If you have a KJV handy, open it and read for yourself. You will find the word “unicorn(s)” appearing in Num.23:22; 24:8; Deut.33:17; Job 39:9, 10; Ps.22:21; 29:6; 92:10; Isa.34:7.

If you have read this far, you may be wondering, just what is this unicorn mentioned in the Bible. Let’s go back to the dictionary. The first definition in my dictionary is “an animal having one horn.” So, a unicorn is a one-horned animal. Do such animals exist today? Have you ever seen a rhinoceros? If you have you have seen an animal with one horn in the middle of his forehead. The rhinoceros fits the bill of a unicorn, a one horned animal.

While words change meanings over time it is quite reasonable to believe that the words unicorn and rhinoceros were used interchangeably in the 1600 era when the KJV was translated. In fact, in the original printing of the KJV, 1611, the footnote for the word “unicorn” in Isa.34:7 was “rhinoceros.” The Douay-Rheims Bible translated before the KJV, as well as the Latin Vulgate of that same era used the word rhinoceros for unicorn.

About two hundred years later the first Noah Webster Dictionary was published in 1828, and the words unicorn and rhinoceros were synonymous terms often used to apply to the same animal. In Webster’s first edition, 1828, the word “unicorn” is defined as, “Unicorn- an animal with one horn; the Monoceros. This name is often applied to the rhinoceros.” That same dictionary defines rhinoceros, “Rhinoceros – a genus of quadrupeds of two species, one of which, the UNICORN, has a single horn growing almost erect from the nose. This animal when full grown is said to be 12 feet in length. There is another species with two horns the BICORNIS. They are natives of Asia and Africa.” If you desire,

you can check this out online at Google.com. Just type in Noah Webster 1828 and you find a link to his dictionary. There is no plausible reason to deny that the unicorn mentioned in the KJV is the rhinoceros of today.

Why didn't the modern translators stay with "unicorn?" Modern translators were uncertain about what the Hebrew word, "re'em", translated "unicorn" in the KJV, really meant, but for some reason they rejected unicorn and chose to translate the Hebrew word "re'em," as "wild ox" or "buffalo." But there is no such thing as a real "wild ox." An ox is defined as a domesticated animal or bull, so to call an ox a "wild ox" is an oxymoron. I believe that in this case the KJV was more correct in using "unicorn" than "wild ox," especially if they had understood more about what a unicorn in the Bible was.

Another reason for the change may have been that translators were trying to refute the atheists who ridiculed the idea of unicorns being mentioned in the Bible. In their ignorance they had failed to research the matter (as is often the case with such men) and were misinterpreting what the Bible had to say about unicorns in the KJV. In their minds they (like many today) were seeing a fancy horse-like creature with a horn protruding from its forehead, something that was fictitious and did not exist. Reasoning that the Bible taught something that was false meant it was untrustworthy and should be rejected.

So, whatever the reasoning of the modern translators of the Bible as to why they chose not to translate the Hebrew word "re'em" as unicorn and instead chose to substitute the word "wild ox, doesn't change the fact that in the original text, Biblical unicorns were real animals. They were one-horned animals, known today as rhinoceroses. They were not some mythical creatures of fairy tales. The rhinoceroses were among the animals on the ark Noah built. After the flood they came out of the ark and continue to exist today.

Prayer Requests & Announcements

- Angie Woodside continues to deal with health issues and has been in and out of the hospital
- Dave and Catherine are in SLC today picking up Author and Maye
- Ross & Debbie are in Sweet Home OR for a Gospel Meeting this week
- Sylvia Ward continues to recover from bypass surgery. She is in a physical rehab facility
- Cameron Bauman brain tumor and radiation treatments
- Scott Boucher (Sparks NV) cancer treatment
- Keep April in your prayers as she deals with health issues
- The Christians in the Philippines
- Worship Assignments for the month of August are posted on the bulletin board in the back

For prayer requests, call or text

Chad @ (208) 221-2587 or Ross @ (208) 680-6590

Worship Assignments

Today

Song Leader – David Porter

Lord's Table – Ben Palmer

– Tom Mitchell

Wednesday

Song Leader – Chad Mitchell

Invitation – Ben Palmer

Blackfoot Church of Christ
370 North Shilling Ave.
Blackfoot, Idaho 83221

Meeting Times:

Sunday Morning Classes 10:00AM
Sunday Morning Worship 11:00AM
Wednesday Evening 7:30PM



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