

The Creation Museum

Personal Reflections and Opinions

By

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The Creation Museum is located on 42 acres near Petersburg, Kentucky. It is a beautiful 60,000 square foot facility surrounded by woods, a stream with waterfall, and nicely landscaped gardens with park-like grounds suitable for meditation and contemplation. The initial cost was \$27 million and construction is continuing as the museum is already expanding. Officials originally predicted that 250,000 people would visit each year but the estimate seems far short -- more than 100,000 have visited in just the first two months. It was founded by a fundamental Christian group called “Answers in Genesis” (AiG) headed by its president and CEO Ken Ham, originally from Australia, who travels the world speaking to groups about the “truth” contained in the King James translation of *The Bible*.

The self-guided tour though the museum starts with a movie called *Men in White* in which two angels visit and dialogue with a woman who is searching for answers about the meaning and purpose of life. They explain how God created the universe and everything in it according to the fundamentalist interpretation of Genesis and the tour continues through labyrinthine corridors and exhibition halls that are majestic testaments to God’s glory. Dioramas and exhibits are professional, attractive, and very well arranged for optimum viewing and clarity.

The museum and, thus, the tour through it, is organized around what the AiG ministry calls the “seven C’s” [sic]:

- Creation
 - The story of how God created the universe
- Corruption
 - Adam’s fall and the result of his sin upon the young world
- Catastrophe
 - The global flood and Noah’s journey
- Confusion
 - The aftermath of the flood and mankind’s search for truth compounded by the sin of Adam
- Christ
 - Jesus proclaims the kingdom of God

- Cross
 - Jesus dies to atone for our sins and bring us salvation
- Consummation
 - Christ will return to destroy evil and reign in peace

I liked several things in the museum including the sincerity of the museum staff and the organization's dedication to proselytizing Christ's plan of salvation for the world. Few Christians could take umbrage with the goal of bringing souls to God and salvation through Christ. The artfully appealing presentations do, indeed, capture one's attention and clearly illustrate the points they intend to make.

I was, however, extremely disappointed.

All the hype in the media barrage and advertising for the museum repeatedly said that the claims they made were backed up by science and I went there hoping to see their reasoning and get an understanding of the basis of their fundamentalist beliefs. Sadly, there was no science displayed anywhere in the museum.

Scientific knowledge depends on the "scientific method," which, concisely, can be stated as four simple steps:

- Observation of phenomena
- Gathering of observable, empirical, measurable evidence
- Collection of data through observation and experimentation
- Creating hypotheses and testing them

The AiG organization seems to have reached their conclusions first and then searched for evidence to support their conclusions. Although they call their approach "science," it is not. They base their conclusions upon a strictly literal understanding of *The Bible* and only supporting scripture backs up every statement made in every exhibit. They claim, for example, that God created the universe and everything in it in six twenty-four hour days, that the universe is only about 6,000 years old, and that a flood covered the entire planet destroying life and forming the continents from a single land mass. They claim, too, that dinosaurs were contemporaries of modern man and even that Noah had them on his ark.

Their logic for contemporaneous dinosaurs, for example, runs like this:

- We know God created all creatures 6,000 years ago because *The Bible* says so
- According to fossil evidence, dinosaurs existed once
- *The Bible* says Noah took at least one pair of every species on his ark so that must have included dinosaurs
- After the deluge, then, dinosaurs and humans inhabited the earth together for a time

When one reaches this conclusion, it is a simple matter to interpret data and physical evidence to support it. They claim to have found human footprints alongside those of dinosaurs, for example, but they were not on display in the museum. They are not able to explain how they know the footprints were made at the same time and not centuries apart. Further, they claim that scientists found traces of unfossilized bones and tissue from a dinosaur in Montana and other places in North America. The scientists are not able to say for certain that their find is really bone and blood but the creationists say that the shape and color “suggests” that this might be the case. AiG has no comment on how the dinosaurs got from Noah’s ark in Turkey to North America after the flood had formed the separate continents. There are hundreds of examples throughout the museum of making the data fit the hypothesis instead of, as science would have it, hypothesis fitting the data.

Unfortunately, my experience in the museum got worse the longer I stayed.

The creationists believe in a very strict literal interpretation of the King James Version of *The Bible* and, therefore, they believe that the concept of evolution and the concept of the six-day creation by God are mutually exclusive ideas. Signs repeatedly and boldly protest belief in evolution and even claim that those who believe in it, and a more liberal interpretation of scripture, are a part of the corruption affecting the world and, by extension, adding to the sufferings of Christ on His Cross. Presentations and exhibits make it clear that the ministry believes that those who do not adopt their fundamentalist interpretations are not “saved” but are “Godless” and will likely not gain eternal life. At one point, a large display accused the Church (one infers “Catholic Church”) of

conspiring with corruption by not standing up for a literal interpretation of Holy Scripture and, therefore, promulgating increased evil in the world.

I found their diatribe to be very offensive and an affront to the hundreds of millions of thinking Christians who believe that God created natural law and used it as a tool, under His supervision, to build our 15 billion year-old universe.

Literal interpretation of scripture is fraught with difficulties and, at best, problematic. Even the fundamentalists have applied meanings to passages that seem to make them as guilty of liberal interpretation as they claim others are. However, that discussion is best left for another time and place. It is only their interpretation of selected verses that explains creation, the flood, and the prophecy of eschatology.

The museum's motto is, "Prepare to Believe." I cannot imagine that anyone walked away from the museum believing the creationist view unless they believed it before they went in. Whether or not the museum will bring people to Christ remains to be seen but it is difficult to imagine that if it does, it will be in large numbers.