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Is the Creation Museum Worth It?

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On May 28th of 2007, in a Kentucky town just down the road from where I live, a project opened its doors to the public that cost an estimated 27 million dollars. The Creation Museum has quickly become a success, boasting over 200,000 visitors as of last September. The venue offers displays depicting everything from dinosaurs to the crucifixion of Christ, totaling a size of over 60,000 square feet. The focus of the museum is to promote the literal reading of Genesis and the theory of a young planet earth.

I have friends who have taken their children to the museum and had a wonderful experience. I have to admit, anytime there are dinosaurs available for viewing I am always tempted to drop the hundred or so dollars it would cost and drag my family out. However, the success of this museum poses some questions about our approach to the Gospel in the postmodern world, imperative questions about the way we interpret the Bible and the way we handle our money and resources.

There are many different lens through which one may view the Hebrew creation story in Genesis. To all parties involved, it is a powerful didactic narrative. We learn that "Adam" (man) is formed from "Adamah" (earth)—teaching us our responsibilities as human beings to be good stewards of the world we have been given. We learn that mankind is incomplete alone, and that "ish" (male) and "isha" (female) are created from each other but are meant to become one in Spirit. We learn that God is in the business of bringing order to the chaos, but does that "order" include a complete and literal chronological account of the origins of the world? Does the passage ask us to believe that the world was created in seven days? What if God did it in seven seconds? What if He took a couple hundred thousand years?

It is a blasphemous assertion for sects in the Christian faith to hear from scholars that aspects of the Hebrew creation story were "borrowed" from the Babylonian creation epic, and that much of the imagery in the Hebrew narrative was common to other cultures of the time. Biblical scholars believe that the one thing that separates the Hebrew narrative from others is their contention that the "one true God" performed all of these wonders. But would it have been unusual for them to "borrow" pieces of the narratives from other cultures and use them as their own? The Hebrews didn't differentiate between the secular and religious—they "owned" everything.

What about using the Bible as an instrument of science? It can be a dangerous road, especially when we are dealing with a God who, throughout history, has discouraged us from building towers, systems, and formulas to reach Him. The God who calls himself "I am," or by some interpretations "I will be who I will be," doesn't always give us the answers. What can we do with the Torah's laws in Exodus? Literal interpretation of the Bible has been used by some to defend many of the atrocities we have committed as a Faith. I think that all sects of our faith can agree that a literal interpretation of Scripture applied without prayerful reflection, a heart open to God's will, and a community to help guide us, can be as dangerous as the application of any other literary or religious text.

In many ways, the amazing advances in science and technology have affirmed the historical accuracy of the Bible. I remember when archeologists discovered remnants of a boat they believed to be Noah's Ark, but, on the other hand I also know that they can find no record or concrete evidence of a Hebrew exodus from slavery in Egypt. Ask yourself—do you still believe that Yahweh parted the Red Sea and delivered His nomadic tribe from slavery? Has He ever delivered you?

Now as I put the issues of interpretation of the Biblical narrative aside, for me personally, the ginormous pink elephant (or Woolly Mammoth) in the room is obviously the 27 million

dollars spent on a project that is basically a Christian theme park.

Before you spend your money to go visit the Creation Museum, I ask you to consider these statistics:

- 37 million Americans live below the poverty line.
- 33 million Americans do not have an adequate supply of food in their household.
- 39 percent of America's poor are children.
- At least 1.35 million children are homeless during a year's time and families constitute about 33 percent of the total homeless population.

I believe that the same Jesus who is the author and blueprint for all of creation, the Jesus that is clearly alive at work in our lives, might just be asking us this pointed question: In a world of starving people, have-nots, oppression, in a world where the darkness is crying out for light, for connection, for relationship, couldn't we have found a better way to spend 27 million dollars?

After all, I personally believe in the Exodus as well as the resurrection of Christ, but not because it has been proven by history, science, or *27 million dollars*. I believe because I have found a relationship with a living God who is bigger than all that.

