

Behind the Scenes of the Museum of the Bible

The nation's best-known county clerk paused between some cuneiform tablets and a 17th-century triptych of the Virgin and Child to wonder at the biblical antiquities surrounding her.

Kim Davis, the Rowan County, Ky., clerk who grabbed national headlines after she refused to issue same-sex marriage licenses, was among the hundreds of visitors who passed through a preview of the Museum of the Bible collection, opened for the first time Wednesday (Feb. 24), at the National Religious Broadcasters International Christian Media Convention, running through Friday in Nashville.

Divided from the event's bustling exhibition hall by heavy black drapes and dim lighting, the preview features one room of sturdy cases holding Bible-era tools, coins and tablets and another featuring models of biblical sites. A costumed worker representing a resident of first-century Nazareth explained the items to onlookers.

Davis said she found her visit inspirational. "The old manuscripts intrigue me the most," she said. "I can't read Greek or Hebrew, but they are beautiful."

Backed by the Green family, owners of Hobby Lobby craft store chain, the museum is set to open late next year in Washington, three blocks from the Capitol. At eight floors and 430,000 square feet, it's a massive building to be packed with antiquities that are drawing increased attention from scholars.

Museum President Cary Summers, who shook hands and held meetings in a VIP room away from the exhibit floor, said the collection was acquired by Hobby Lobby and donated to the

museum.

Museum officials offered a mini-preview of some of the items during the pope's visit to Philadelphia in September, but they chose a full preview at the National Religious Broadcasters' Nashville conference mostly for its timing, Summers said. In fact, the museum is the event's platinum sponsor. {eo}

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