

Why the Museum of the Bible Doesn't Have Any Images of Jesus

The grand opening of the Museum of the Bible this Friday will bring to light how the Bible has impacted society throughout all of history. When you immediately walk in, there's a huge, "wow factor." The museum has plenty of electronics, gizmos, displays, movies and cool effects. But what about the "Jesus factor?" In other words, where exactly is Jesus inside this museum, because after all, He is God?

"You can't tell the story of the Bible without telling the story of Jesus," says Steven Bickley, Vice President of Marketing for the Museum of the Bible.

Officials at the Museum say you'll find Jesus throughout and there are references to Him sprinkled around on certain floors. He's mentioned during a video of archaeological findings in Capernaum and in a temporary exhibit on the "stations of the cross" depicting his last hours. There's also a Jesus plaque that explains how Gospel writers say Jesus called himself, "the son of man." But that plaque is nestled in between the plaques of other historical biblical figures.

"From a content perspective, it's the Museum of the Bible," says Seth Pollinger, the museum's Director of Content. "Now, the Bible has a lot of characters and one of those characters is Jesus, so Jesus is an important character throughout the museum. I think the focus is more of historical spread of the Bible."

It sure seems that way, because trying to find an image of Jesus in the museum beyond traditional church art proved unsuccessful.

"We did not show any image of Jesus here, and that was intentional," Bickley says. "We decided that its best not to because there is no actual photographic or actual image of Him to not venture and bring our opinions here, and so that's why you won't see a picture of Jesus in the museum."

How about the biblical story of His birth or His teachings? In the 12-minute movie devoted to the New Testament, it's not mentioned.

"Well, in 12 minutes, you have to be selective," Pollinger tells CBN News. "So we decided that our main theme was going to be the spread of this small group, they start with a few Jewish believers, they expand into a larger pool of Jewish believers and then it expands into a church of Jew and Gentile."

But beyond the movie, there is no actual area devoted to Christ's birth, death and resurrection, despite the fact that there are five exhibit floors and more than 400,000 square feet of space. The museum's director of content offers a reason why.

"When you're looking at actual exhibit spaces, it is a museum about the Bible, so it's going to tend to have a lot of manuscripts and books," Pollinger explains. "You only have so much space. We decided to try and feature what's the influence on music and literature and on those you're going to have the impact of Jesus and nativity with references to songs and film and things like that. It's a bit of a different approach."

There is an exhibit devoted to the Virgin Mary where you see the baby Jesus in artwork. "By showing these 40 images, it reinforces the significance of this character, Jesus, and how he's been a worldwide influence," says Pollinger.

However, when you tour Nazareth, the village where Jesus grew up, there's no mention of Jesus' time there. It's more about the Nazarene culture. So what are we to make of all this? Keep

in mind the mission of the museum changed over the years.

In 2011, the mission was, “to bring to life the living word of God, to tell its compelling story of preservation and to inspire confidence in the absolute authority and reliability of the Bible.”

Today, the mission is more scholastic in nature where they, “invite all people to engage with the history, narrative and impact of the Bible” Steven Bickley, the museum’s vice president of marketing, says the museum’s main focus is hoping this good book called the Bible spurs curiosity, especially with those who question its authenticity.

“We hope that people are so interested in the narrative of the Bible that they pick up and start reading, whether it’s the Gospels, the epistles or anything in the Hebrew Bible. That’s our hope.” {eoa}

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