

# Faith



## The Bible Comes to Life in Washington, D.C., Museum

BY TROY ANDERSON

IT'S CHANGED CULTURES, altered the course of history, and influenced the lives of millions. Now, the world's most famous book — the Bible, written over thousands of years in three different languages by kings, prophets, poets, and fishermen — is getting its own museum in Washington, D.C.

The Museum of the Bible is set to open later this year. It is the vision of Steve Green, the billionaire evangelical and president of Hobby Lobby.

The eight-story, 430,000-square-foot, high-tech museum is expected to cost approximately \$1 billion to build, and will house the Green Collection, which includes the second-largest private collection of Dead Sea Scrolls in the world, and boasts over 40,000 biblical texts and artifacts.

Visitors will see the world's oldest Jewish prayer book, and its largest collection of Torah scrolls.

The museum's extraordinary exhibits range from fragments of the Gutenberg Bible, to first editions of

the King James Bible, as well as Bibles that once belonged to Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, and Babe Ruth.

At a recent event at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif., Green told the audience that the museum will preserve one of the world's largest private collections of rare biblical artifacts and manuscripts. It will also host the Bible Scholars Initiative — a global network of biblical scholars involving more than 60 institutions in six countries. The network is expected to pioneer groundbreaking research

**BIBLE LIFE** In these artist renditions, the 430,000-square-foot museum, located in D.C., will feature interactive displays, a media wall, a children's gallery, and a coffee shop.

into the Bible's historical validity. As Green told the thousands of attendees: "What gets me excited is to think that God preserved the Dead Sea Scrolls until he was ready for them to be discovered. Now, I wonder what he has left for us to discover."

Rick Warren, founder and senior pastor of Saddleback Church is a member of the museum's board of directors.

Warren maintains the Bible has changed more lives than any other book ever written.

"There are more songs written about Scripture than any other book," says Warren, the best-selling author of *The Purpose Driven Life*. "We speak the language we speak right now in America — English — because of the King James Version of the Bible.

"This book transformed English from just being a dialect to a major language."

The museum is enlisting some of the world's leading authorities on the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as experts in textual criticism, to help engage people with the Bible's history and narrative.

Also, as part of a multiyear agreement with the Israel Antiquities Authority, the top-floor gallery of the museum will display rare archaeological finds from Israel.

Josh McDowell, a Christian apologetic and the best-selling author of *More Than a Carpenter*, tells Newsmax that he expects the museum to be a first-class facility featuring the latest technologies, as well as a top-notch biblical research program unlike "anything else on the face of the earth."

"This museum is going to bring attention to the Bible, an incredible book that has survived for thousands of years, had a profound impact on culture and upon individual people's lives," McDowell says. "I think the one thing this museum will do is to start a dialogue about Scripture.

McDowell has confidence that the museum "will be done in an intelligent, evidential way," adding: "It will be based on facts, research, and truth. I think it will be something that many people from all over the world, whenever they come to the United States, especially to Washington, D.C., will go there."

## The First English Bible Printed in America

Among the fascinating exhibits visitors to the Bible Museum will have is an opportunity to view an extremely rare Aitken Bible, the first complete English Bible to be printed in America.

Often referred to as "the Bible of the Revolution," it became in September 1782 the only Bible ever to be commended to Americans by Congress.

The congressional resolution stated that "the United States in Congress assembled highly approve of the pious and laudable undertaking of Mr. Aitken," adding that members "recommend this edition of the Bible to the inhabitants of the United States."

The signer of that resolution was Charles Thomson — the secretary of the Continental Congress of the United States.

Thomson, a signatory to the Declaration of Independence and an accomplished theologian in his own right, would go on to publish his own translation of the Holy Bible, known as "Thompson's Bible."

The congressional resolution signed by Charles Thomson stands as a powerful reminder of the spiritual values that were at work during those extraordinary, formative years of America's creation. — T.A.

Starting in late 2017, visitors will walk through 40-foot high, bronze gates inscribed with the first chapter of Genesis as published in the Gutenberg Bible.

Once inside, they will become immersed in a story that has shaped the world like none other.

"When we say you will be walking into the Bible, you really will be walking into the Bible," Summers says. "So why are we doing this museum? We want people to engage in the Bible. We want the Bible to be the center of conversations throughout the world.

"But how do we do that? We want people to touch God's word and we want God to touch them. That's what this project is all about." □

**MUSEUM OF THE BIBLE** invites all people to engage with the Bible through museum exhibits and scholarly pursuits. Dedicated to the impact, history, and narrative of the Bible, the museum will open in 2017, three blocks from the U.S. Capitol in Washington.

- **Location:** 409 3rd St. S.W., Washington, D.C., 20024-4706
- **Total square footage:** 430,000
- **Floors:** 8 (including two basement levels and two new floors being added onto the existing rooftop)

- **Central exhibit floors:** 5, including Impact, History and Narrative of the Bible; long-term international libraries; and long-term international museum galleries)
- **Biblical garden:** 1 on rooftop

- **Number of biblical texts and artifacts on display on the History floor alone:** More than 500

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT [MuseumoftheBible.org](http://MuseumoftheBible.org)