



## Mything the Boat

Despite the best efforts of AiG to dispel many myths swirling on the Internet and in some media reports, we continue to have to respond to bloggers, editorial writers, and reporters to set the record straight regarding the Ark Encounter. We have catalogued a few of these Ark-related myths here, with a rebuttal to each false or misleading claim.

**Contention: The Ark Encounter is being built using tax dollars**

**FALSE.** Here is but one example AiG has had to refute: a false claim in an August 3, 2014 editorial in The State Journal (the newspaper of Frankfort, Kentucky's capital) that declared that AiG is seeking \$18.25 million from the state to build our full-size Ark. In its reply, AiG pointed out that no taxpayer dollars are being applied for in building the Ark. Instead, the incentive (available through the Tourism Development Act, designed to boost the state economy and add jobs) pertains to sales tax collected at the finished Ark, i.e., from the people who will actually visit. If the completed Ark draws large crowds, then a portion of the state sales tax collected at the park (on food, tickets, etc.) could be refunded up to a limit. Thus, no unwilling taxpayers will see their tax dollars used to build the Ark. When the Ark opens and is fully operational, Ark Encounter has the opportunity to have the sales tax it collects refunded, to a maximum-approved \$18.25 million over 10 years through the state's TDA legislation.

**Contention: It is illegal for the Ark Encounter to hire only those people who can sign its statement of faith.**

**FALSE.** First, the Ark Encounter has not yet determined what its hiring policies will be, or whether different levels of employees may have different requirements. For the moment, we point out the following:

1. It is well established in federal and state law that religious organizations are permitted to give employment preference to members of their own religion. Since the Ark Encounter meets the criteria, and is owned and operated by a Christian non-profit organization (AiG/Crosswater Canyon), Ark Encounter is allowed to avail itself of these provisions of law just as every other religious organization in the Commonwealth does without issue. This, of course, just makes sense. Without this important exemption in the law, no church or religious organization would be able to maintain its identity or any consistency of message.
2. Federal law is supportive of AiG. That includes Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. While the Act prohibits discrimination in hiring practices, it specifically carves

out an exception for churches and religious organizations, which are permitted to give employment preference to adherents of their own religion.

3. State law is also supportive. KRS 344.090 specifically provides: “[I]t is *not* unlawful practice for . . . a religious corporation, association, or society to employ an individual on the basis of his religion to perform work connected with the carrying on by such corporation, association, or society of its religious activity.”

Answers in Genesis and its Ark Encounter are just like every other religious group. There is nothing unique or special in regard to employment of staff.

**Contention: The possible refund of state sales tax collected at the opened Ark Encounter is a violation of the so-called “separation of church and state.”**

**FALSE.** This myth has already been debunked by an attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union of Kentucky, who told “USA Today” in 2010 that the state’s Tourism Development Act should be non-discriminatory towards the Ark Encounter. This ACLU lawyer told the paper that “courts have found that giving such tax exemptions on a non-discriminatory basis does not violate the establishment clause of the First Amendment, even when the tax exemption goes to a religious purpose.”

Indeed, federal cases involving incentives and establishment of religion have been generally permissive to promote economic development (e.g., a 2009 ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, which includes Kentucky). The granting of a sales tax refund to Kentucky tourist attractions is for a legitimate public purpose: economic development in Kentucky, which would otherwise not be available if the project would be built in another state. The Ark Encounter, which was courted by other states, decided on building in Kentucky because of the prospect of getting a refund of sales tax that it collected after opening in 2016.

AiG would further suggest that it would be illegal for the state to engage in viewpoint or religious discrimination simply because the content of the Ark Encounter happens to focus on biblical history. In addition, the state is not compelling anyone to visit the Ark Encounter, thus there is no “establishment of religion” with the proposed refund of sales tax collected at the Ark.

An equally important fact is that the Ark Encounter will warmly welcome all persons of all backgrounds, persuasions, colors, creeds, and beliefs, and embrace the thoughtful discussions and debates that may be invoked by all those who visit.

Offering such a refund incentive as an effort to draw projects to build in a state is a common practice, though we point out again that no money from the state budget is being used to build the Ark. The performance-based refund is offered if a project successfully brings millions of tourism dollars into the state budget (a net to the state) and also adds jobs. The sales tax refund program is why AiG decided to build here, not Indiana for example, and so it is Kentucky that will benefit financially and this state will see its programs and services better funded.

In carrying out the TDA’s goal of promoting the development of tourism as an economic engine in the state, Kentucky must remain *neutral*—neither hostile towards religion (allowing “free exercise” of religion) nor show favoritism (“establishing” religion), as per the U.S. Constitution. In a similar way, a public school must be neutral towards churches and other religious groups if



the school rents out its facilities to groups; this school, as an agent of the state, can neither favor nor be hostile towards religion.

**Contention: The Creation Museum (the Ark's sister project) is failing, and the Ark Encounter will too.**

**FALSE.** This is one of the most puzzling of the false claims. Each year the museum's attendance and revenue have exceeded the projections AiG set before the museum opened in 2007. On some summer days the museum may have 3,000 visitors. This past fiscal year the museum attendance has risen. The local Chamber of Commerce is ecstatic to have us in the area and to see the museum bring in hundreds of millions of tourism dollars into the region.

Since many critics say the Ark won't be successful anyway, then they should have nothing to fear about the refund of sales tax, which only happens if attendance hits high milestones. A well-attended park adds tourism dollars to the state and generates thousands of new jobs. Kentucky and its citizens also benefit from the state income tax collected from these new positions, plus from the sales tax collected at businesses that are created in the region because of the Ark—money which will go towards funding state programs.

**Contention: With the number of trees you chopped down to build this wooden structure, you are helping destroy the environment.**

Actually, many of the large timbers came from areas where a beetle infestation killed trees. Much of the remaining timber came from renewable forests, which are carefully managed.

**Contention: The Bible doesn't say the Ark looked like the one AiG is building. AiG's ship has a shaped bow and stern, as well as a sail-like structure on the bow.**

The Hebrew text in the Bible does not say the Ark must have been a rectangular box. In fact, Scripture does not discuss the shape of Noah's Ark beyond the overall proportions of length, breadth, and depth. Ships have long been described with dimensions like this without implying a block-shaped hull. Also, AiG had engineers research ancient ships and perform water tank experiments, and they found that such structures on ancient ships had a dramatic effect on stability. For more information on the shape of the Ark, see <https://answersingenesis.org/noahs-ark/thinking-outside-the-box/>

Furthermore, Noah may have possessed a strong knowledge of shipbuilding before he built the Ark, or he could have spent years acquiring such knowledge after God called him. Critics of the Bible's history often assume that no one had built ships in Noah's day, but nowhere does the Bible even suggest this. Ancient man was highly intelligent, seen in such amazing feats like the building of the pyramids in Egypt. (See more below.)

**Contention: AiG is using tools, cranes, and other modern-day technology to build the Ark, but Noah didn't have access to them.**

Even many Christians (most of them unwittingly) have adopted an evolutionary view of man's intelligence and achievements over the past few millennia. Many people today believe that ancient man slowly went from making "primitive" items (e.g., stone tools) to working with bronze and iron. But the evidence researchers have collected from around the globe refutes this false "evolutionized" view of human history. Humans have been highly intelligent from the beginning and could quickly gain knowledge to create sophisticated technology. For instance, we read the following Bible verse about the descendants of Adam and Eve near the beginning of human history:

His brother's name was Jubal. He was the father of all those who play the harp and flute. And as for Zillah, she also bore Tubal-Cain, an instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron. (Genesis 4:21-22).

**Contention: The state of Kentucky and one of its consultants claim that the Ark will not see 1.4 million - 2.2 million visitors a year, as AiG claims.**

Regardless of the naysayers, we stand by the professional primary source research conducted by America's Research Group (ARG) in 2014 that has predicted a minimum attendance in the first year of 1.4 million people and up to 2.2 million. This is the same group that predicted 400,000 visitors for the first year of the Creation Museum—and 404,000 came that year. As the saying goes, the "proof is in the pudding"—we will find out in 2017 (as the Ark opens in 2016).