

# No apologies

Creationism apologist Ken Ham wants to rattle the culture and the church.

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ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

**A**s co-founder of the apologetics ministry Answers in Genesis, Ken Ham often draws scorn from scientists for his views on creation.

After all, he unequivocally states that the earth was created thousands, not billions, of years ago. That dinosaurs and man existed harmoniously together. And that methods used to date the earth and fossils are flawed. Such statements don't exactly endear him to scientists.

Ham's goal is to challenge the church and the secular world.

"We challenge the church to stand on God's word in Genesis and make a statement to the culture that God's word is true," Ham said. "And challenge the secular world that the history of the world according to the big-bang theory and evolution as taught in public schools is not true. The Bible's account is true."

Ham might be scoffed at by the science world, but he's something of a superstar to creationists. He's a high-profile spokesman of sorts, proclaiming the inerrancy of the Genesis account of creation through Answers in Genesis and the ministry's Creation Museum in Petersburg, Ky.

The multimillion-dollar museum, which opened last year, presents a biblical account of creation complete with dinosaurs in the Garden of Eden. So far, Ham said, the museum has attracted close to 375,000 visitors, far exceeding Answers in Genesis' projections.

Ham and Terry Mortenson, a creationism supporter and scholar, will lead an Answers in Genesis conference Sunday and Monday at The

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Church at Pinnacle Hills in Rogers. Ham also will speak during worship services today and Sunday at Fellowship Bible Church of Northwest Arkansas.

Speaking by phone from Kentucky, Ham said the role of Answers in Genesis is to defend the Christian faith. The ministry focuses on Genesis, specifically the first 11 chapters. Genesis is key, he said, because if readers doubt the story of creation or don't accept it as a literal, historical account, the rest of the Bible is also open to doubt.

"It's an issue of biblical authority," Ham said. "Genesis is the foundational history for the rest of the Bible, for all of Christian doctrine. ... If you can't believe Genesis 1 through 11, really there is no basis for Christianity."

That literal view of creation is a point of doubt for some Christians, and it's part of Ham's mission to challenge them and the church as a whole. Some Christians support a "young earth" view, but others believe in an "old earth" theory, as well as in evolution.

Polls show Americans are indeed divided when it come to views on evolution and creationism. Some even hold conflicting views. According to polls conducted last year by USA Today and Gallup, 24 percent of Americans believe the theory of evolution and the biblical story of creation are true.

A May 2007 Gallup poll also showed a range of beliefs about the age of the earth. In the poll, 43 percent agreed with the statement "God created man in present form within the last 10,000 years or so" compared with 38

percent who believe man developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life, but with guidance from God. Fourteen percent said humans developed over millions of years, but with no help from God.

To Ham, belief in a young earth isn't the central issue.

"Teaching about a young earth is associated with what we do, but what we are really about is taking God at his word and doing scientific research to confirm God's word," he said. "The Bible doesn't use the age of the earth as a test of whether you are a Christian or not."

Mike Wavering is an associate professor of curriculum and instruction at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, specializing in science education. He works with students who plan to become science teachers. Wavering said the "young earth" theory stems from a literal interpretation of Genesis — that the earth was created in six 24-hour days.

"Some have that as a part of their belief system, but a large number don't hold to a literal 24-hour day," Wavering said.

Wavering said many Christian groups have no problem with an "old earth" or with the scientific view of how the earth was formed. He said the Creation Museum shows the Answers in Genesis view of creation, but it's a view contrary to science.

"What they are trying to do is show their view of how it happened, and certainly one of the big things people talk about is human beings and dinosaurs lived at the same time. Scientific accounts certainly do not support that kind of view," Wavering said.

Wavering said science teachers are required to teach a scientific view of how the earth developed in their science classes. Dis-

cussions of other views belong in comparative religion classes, he said.

"Science class is a place for science," he said.

As for the "young earth" theory, Wavering said research over the past few centuries hasn't supported that claim. He said the scientific view is that the earth is several billion years old.

Ham is undeterred by the scientific community's views and isn't afraid to argue with their conclusions. His goal, however, is to challenge the church "to get back to God's word."

"We need to make the next generation see we do take God's word seriously so they will listen to us when we preach about the Gospel. How can we preach with authority if the book the message comes from has one major section you're not sure you can believe?"

Ham blames churches for much of the doubt about the Genesis account of creation. He said most of the children in Sunday Schools are public school students who are taught about evolution.

"Sunday Schools don't deal with it and they grow up with the idea that the Bible is just a book of stories — wonderful stories about Jonah or Adam and Eve," Ham said. "But they don't understand the Bible is really a book of history."

Ham said churches teach spiritual and moral lessons that often don't seem real to children, while at school they learn about tangible things like fossils and dinosaurs.

"The church didn't know what to do with those issues so they gave it up and didn't worry about it," he said. "Kids started realizing 'what I'm taught at school is different than what the Bible says' and the church didn't

deal with it."

While traveling the country to lead conferences and seminars, Ham said, he often finds Christian participants feel inadequately prepared to defend their faith.

"They are intimidated by the questions and the science," he said. "We have given them answers and it's like ... a shot in the arm to be bold for the Christian faith."

During the Rogers conference and worship services, Ham said, he will challenge participants to believe in the relevance of Genesis. Ham and Mortenson will discuss dinosaurs and Genesis, as well as the age of the earth, Noah's flood, "apemen" and the defense of the Christian faith.

Drew Tucker, associate pastor at The Church at Pinnacle Hills, is excited about the conference and the opportunity to teach the biblical account of creation. He said Genesis forms the basis of the church's beliefs.

Tucker said Genesis is one of the most attacked books of the Bible because of the conflict between evolution and creationism. He said the Christian church as a whole hasn't placed enough emphasis on the creation account in Genesis.

*The Answers in Genesis Conference is 6:30-9 p.m. Sunday and 9:30 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday at The Church at Pinnacle Hills, 2448 Pinnacle Hills Parkway. Cost is \$12 per person or \$20 per family. Free student sessions are at 9:30 a.m. Sunday (kindergarten through sixth grade) and 1 p.m. Sunday (grades 7-12). Information is available online at [www.churchph.com](http://www.churchph.com) or [www.answersingenesis.org/go/rogers](http://www.answersingenesis.org/go/rogers). Ham will speak during the 5 and 6:45 p.m. services today at Fellowship Bible Church, 1051 W. Pleasant Grove Road, Rogers. He will also speak during the 8, 9:30 and 11 a.m. services Sunday.*