

You and Me, Lord (Build an Ark)

Genesis 6-9

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[Bill Cosby]

Of course, Noah had a heck of a job, really. He had to go out and collect all of the animals in the world by two's . . . two mosquitoes . . . "Male or female?" . . . and he had to keep telling the rabbits, "Only two, *only* two, *only* two."

So we find Noah pulling up the last two animals—two hippos—and he's really in a hurry to get them up, because he's afraid that the Lord's gonna call him and ask him to do something else, and his nerves are shot. This is one heck of a job for a man 600 years old!

So we find him pulling up the last two hippos, and of course the Lord *does* call him there. "Come on, fat hippos, hurry up! Come on, will you please?"

"*Noah.*"

"What? What do you want?"

"*You got to take one of those hippos out and bring in another one.*"

"What for?"

"*'Cause you got two males down there, and you need to bring in a female.*"

"I'm not bringin' nothin' in! You change one of 'em!"

"*C'mon . . . you know I don't work like that.*"

"Well, I'm sick and tired of this! I've had enough of this stuff. I've been working all day . . . working on it for days and days . . . I'm sick and tired of this!"

"*Noah . . .*"

"Yeah?"

"*How long can you tread water?*"

"Yeah, well I got news for you . . . I'm sick and tired of this whole mess! The whole neighborhood's out there laughin' at me . . . they're all having a grand time at good ol' Noah there. I went out and got my best friend Larry. I said, 'Larry, listen. I been talkin' with the Lord.' Larry said, 'Oh really?' I said, 'Yeah. Lord — Larry, Larry — Lord.' You walked off there and left when I had 'em all up there laughin' at me. You know I'm the only guy in this neighborhood with an ark?

"People around here with picket signs . . . walkin' up and down . . . I'm sick and *tired* of this stuff here! People are walkin' around here, 'How you doin', Tarzan? How's everything up there?' I'm sick and tired of this mess here!

"You're supposed to know all and see all . . . you let me go out there and bring in a pregnant elephant, you give me no manual for delivery or nothin', never told me the thing was pregnant, here's good ol' Noah waitin' underneath the elephant there . . . *brooomm* . . . right on top of Noah . . . I'm sick and tired of all this mess, see? I've had enough of all this stuff . . . runnin' around . . . you're supposed to know all and see all, like I said before.

"You let me go out there and do all this stuff, and you never even looked in the bottom of that ark! Have you looked down there? No! Who's gonna clean up that mess down there? Not me, I'll tell you . . . I've had enough of this . . .

"I tell you what I'm gonna do. I'm lettin' all these animals out, then I'm going to burn down this ark [thunder sounds], and then I'm going to Florida somewhere, because you haven't done nothin'! I'm sick and tired of all this mess [sound of rain] . . . you're foolin' around . . . and you haven't done nothin' . . . and you gotta . . . rainin' . . . [thunder sounds louder] This is not a shower, is it? OK, Lord, me and you, right? 'Cause I knew . . . all the time . . .

“OK, Lord, me and you, right?” It must have been awfully tough for old Noah.

I found several Web sites on Noah and the ark. Some try to explain how feasible the whole thing was. One explained how the ark probably just carried dinosaur eggs instead of dinosaurs. There is a whole lot of highly suspicious science connected with the ark and the flood, and some reputable science too.

Some argue the flood was localized. You can make a case for that in the Hebrew language, because “earth” can be translated “land,” and “heavens” translated “sky.”

National Geographic just had a fascinating article recently on Bob Ballard’s expedition to the Black Sea just north of Mt. Ararat. There’s great evidence for a catastrophic flood about 7,000 years ago, as sea levels rose at the end of the last Ice Age.

Well, I can’t explain the biology, geology, and hydrology of the ark and the flood. But I do have independent evidence that the Creator, who holds together every particle in creation with the word of His power, is quite capable of any number of things.

An angry critic came to a tired pastor one day and demanded, “How did Noah get all those animals in the ark?” The tired pastor said, “I don’t know. When I get to Heaven, I’ll ask Noah.” The angry man said, “Well, what if Noah’s not there?” The tired pastor replied, “Then *you* ask him.”

Now, please understand, in Christianity all questions are permitted. And what that fictional pastor implied was a *sin*. However, his frustration is understandable, for although we can ask any question, we often ask only stupid questions.

We ask about dinosaur eggs
instead of the heart of God.
We go looking for the ark on Mt. Ararat,
when we should be looking on Mt. Calvary.

I found one Web site, www.GodsArk.org, which explains how some folks are rebuilding the ark in Frostberg, Maryland, because Pastor Richard Greene had several visions in the spring of 1974. They’ve been building it since April of 1976. They’re about halfway through, and you can see it right there on the side of I-68, west of Baltimore, where the world drives by. It’s 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high.

I wonder if Pastor Greene ever feels like Bill Cosby . . . or Noah.

You’ll find the story of Noah in Genesis 6-9. It’s just a couple of chapters after the story of Adam and creation, when God’s Spirit wind broods over the waters. And God separates the waters above from the waters below, and dry land appears. He creates the animals, and then He says, “Let us make man in our own image and likeness, and let him have dominion over the

animals.” God puts Adam in a garden. All the animals come to him. Then disaster: fruit, naked shame, and curses.

Now Genesis 6:5:

The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.

“God accomplishes all things according to the counsel of His will,” and His heart was filled with pain . . . over us. No accidents. *Amazing.* And then I wonder: If we’re to be made in His image, must we also taste His pain?

The LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth--men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air--for I am grieved that I have made them." But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God.

Noah was God’s buddy. Verse 13 . . .

So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth.

God is going to “uncreate” His creation. This is creation in reverse—God’s wrath. He removes His sustaining Word, and creation comes undone. The waters will come back together; the land will disappear. All the creatures will die . . . except those in the ark of God’s covenant Word. Verse 18 . . .

But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark--you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you.

. . . all destroyed except those in this ark of God’s covenant. This ark will literally be a floating new creation. And the very same waters that destroy the old world will bear this ark up to the new world, on the top of Mt. Ararat. And once again God says, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.”

God uncreates and then recreates. Noah and his ark *are* this new creation. But that must have been hard to believe back in verse 14 when God said to Noah:

Make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high.

And Noah said, “But *Lord*, that’s one and a half football fields long!”

And God said, “Verily, verily, it is.”

Noah said, “I don’t have any cypress wood!”

And God said, “Go cut it down.”
And Noah said, “But yea, Lord, thou hast not supplied the nails.”
And God said, “Go to Home Depot and buy them!”

We don’t know if He said that, but in verse 17 He *did* say:

I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish.

And according to Bill Cosby, Noah says, “Right. Who is this, *really* — Larry?” I think Bill Cosby has a good grasp of the Biblical story, because surely this was incredibly confusing for old Noah. He must have suffered a good deal of ridicule for it. I imagine it cost Noah absolutely everything he had. In the end, it surely did; for the only thing he kept was what was on that boat. Everything else was destroyed.

Everything you have will be destroyed
except for that which is in the ark.

Why did God have Noah build the ark . . . when He could have built it Himself? In fact, in a way He *did*. I mean, Noah could pound some nails into the wood, but Noah couldn’t make the wood, Noah couldn’t make the iron in the nail, and Noah couldn’t even make *Noah*.

Do you have any idea how simple a boat is compared to one strand of DNA in a tree . . . or a Noah, for that matter?

Since 1988 the U.S. government has spent half a billion dollars on an effort to map one strand of DNA, thereby identifying 30,000 genes and the sequence of 3 billion chemical base pairs. That’s to simply *map* a strand of DNA, let alone *make* a strand of DNA . . . or beyond that, make a cell or the astronomical number of cells arranged perfectly, which we call a tree or a Noah.

And yet God simply speaks those things into existence with a Word. How hard could a boat be for God? So God does all the hard parts: wood, iron, Noah, creation . . . but He won’t pound one, lousy nail.

So God says, “Noah, build a boat — pound some nails.”

It reminds me of my basement. I’m finishing my basement. Andrew Trawick has helped me a lot, and my seven-year-old son Coleman has helped me too. So Coleman will say, “Look what we built — me and Dad!” But . . .

*I mapped it out,
I got the plans approved,
I bought the wood,
I cut the boards,
I arranged them all in their place,
I even sired Coleman himself!*

At one point I did start the nail in the wood and then did say, “Coleman, buddy, sure you can, come here and pound this nail.”

God said, “Let there be light, and there was light. He put the iron in the ground, He placed the stars in the heavens, He made trees and DNA, and He said, “Let us make man in our image.” He “subjected the world to futility in hope,” writes Paul.

Dinosaurs,
Plate tectonics,
Angels,
Empires . . .

He made them all; He arranged everything in its place, even Noah, and then He said, “Noah, buddy, come pound this nail . . . build an ark.”

Why did God do that? — Have Noah build the ark, when He could do it Himself so easily? It took Noah 120 years! God could have just zapped one down!

Peter writes that “God waited patiently in the days of the building of the ark.” When I’m working hard on the basement, it takes a lot of patience to have Coleman come pound a nail. Pounding a nail is easy for me . . . but not for Coleman. Four million bucks for a building campaign is absolutely no problem for God. But to be honest, it is a problem for us.

I feel like that Bill Cosby Noah, when God says, “Noah, you’ve got two male hippos. You need to go get a female.” Noah says, “No . . . I’m sick and tired of this! Lord, you change ‘em!”

God can do that. Miracle sex change operations on hippos are no problem for God. I’ve *seen* miracles, so I want to say:

“God, I’m sick and tired of workin’ and preachin’ and lovin’ your church. I’m sick and tired of ridicule, confusion, and sacrifice. I’m sick and tired, God! *You* change ‘em!

“God, I’m tired of giving. God, you change just one, lousy decimal point down at the bank. *You* change ‘em.”

“*Peter?*”

“What?”

“*You know I don’t work like that?*”

“Why not?”

Why? Why does God use us? Why the confusion, the ridicule, the sacrifice? Why does God have Noah build the boat?

Well, I do know that things you build you tend to enjoy more. I’ll appreciate my basement more when I’m done, because *I* pounded the nails.

In fact, late one night I also pounded my finger . . . really, really hard. And I said, “Thank you, Jesus.” I really did! Not because I’m so spiritual, but because I couldn’t feel my finger at all, and it was already black, and I knew that soon I’d be suffering, and I know we’re supposed to thank God in sufferings. So I figured I’d thank Him before it hurt and before I started to curse.

But things you suffer for you appreciate more. And I’ll never forget *that* nail in *that* board.

Things you help build you appreciate more once they’re built.

Things you help build and suffer for you appreciate even more still.

Things you build with someone else, suffering with someone else (like a family or a church or a marriage), you appreciate most.

Sharing pain you share the joy.

Jesus said, “I came that my joy might be in you.” He is the Word through whom all things are created and sustained. He wants to share with you the joy of the Creator.

When I’m working on the basement Coleman asks, “Can I help?” It’s more work to let him help than not, but I do let him sometimes. I do because I want to share my joy. One day we’ll be standing in our new basement, and I hope Coleman says, “Look what we built! Me and you, Dad!” And I’ll say, “Yep, we built it! Me and you, son.”

If I was a better dad I’d let Coleman help even more . . . unless, of course, he got arrogant and started saying stuff like this: “Look what *I* made . . . I alone. It’s mine!”

You know, we work and make money and say, “It’s mine . . . *I* made it,” and we forget who made the DNA in every cotton fiber in every dollar bill . . . and we forget who made us.

Everything you think you yourself own alone is stolen property. And so at some point the Good Father says, “Fine. Go ahead. Try and make it on your own.” Then creation uncreates; we fall and we die, arrogant and stupid.

The Good Father wants to hear, “Look what we made! Me and you, Dad!” And my good son Coleman wants to help, not because he wants to *be* me; he wants to be *like* me.

I was walking with him last week and he said, “Daddy, when I grow up I want to be just like you.” What a gift!

I want him to help because I’m not just building a basement, I’m building a son in my image.

Noah is building a boat, and God is building man in His own image.

At times it’s hard to be the son of a Father who wants to make you in His image. And you’re sick and tired of pounding nails, because you find that sometimes it hurts.

Well, soon Noah will stand in a new garden in a new world, and he can say, “Look what we did! Me and you, Lord.”

Building the ark was a gift of grace. God didn't *need* Noah; He *wanted* Noah to share His joy. He wanted Noah to bear His image.

Adam (which means man) was in God's image but not perfectly. He tried to do it alone . . . tried to *be* God . . . and he fell. Noah (which probably means comforter) was more in God's image than Adam. He was like Adam, but he helped God recreate the world. Yet he was still fallen.

He plants a garden in the new world,
 gets drunk on fruit,
 gets naked in shame,
 and curses his grandson.

God admits in Genesis 8:21 that “every inclination of man's heart is still evil from childhood.” None is perfectly in God's image till we meet Jesus. Jesus is called the last Adam (“Eschatos” in Greek, meaning “uttermost”). *Uttermost Adam*. He is the “perfect image of God” . . . “firstborn of all creation.” The rest of us are still being made in the image.

Jesus is the uttermost Adam, and He is also called Comforter (Noah). Through Him creation is made and remade (redeemed). He's the Word.

I hope you see that the story of Noah is not really *about* Noah (not even for Noah). The book of Hebrews says Noah “inherited his righteousness.” He inherited it from Jesus. Noah was saved by Jesus. In fact, I Peter even seems to say Jesus went to the underworld and preached to those who mocked Noah, where Noah had failed, in order to save them. Jesus is the uttermost Noah. *Amazing mysteries.*

But please see that Noah is a picture of Jesus, and Jesus preached, “A flood is coming.” Jesus is a carpenter who built an ark. In fact, He would like you to help.

Jesus taught that a flood is coming, but the flood is fire, and He brings it. One day the earth will be purified with fire, and I tend to think the fire, in some way, is already here. It's God's judgment. But the same fire that destroys bears up the ark to another world. The cross that judges also saves. The fire's already burning, and soon it will consume you, or it will bear you up. We call it death and judgment. It will burn away your old world, but it will also bear you up, if you're in the ark.

See, Jesus built an ark . . . but you don't find it on Mr. Ararat.

In Isaiah 54 Isaiah compares the ark to Jerusalem . . . but not the *old* Jerusalem; the *new* Jerusalem.

That's also a Bride,
 that is the Bride of Christ;

That's also the Church,
that is God's people.

His people are *in* Christ; they are His body. Paul wrote, "Anyone in Christ is a new creation." Think of it! A new creation floating in a sea of fire, judgment, and death.

So where does Jesus build His ark of God's covenant? On what mountain do we find it? — Mt. Calvary—Hill of the Skull. "For this was His plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in Him and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things by the blood of His cross."

That means God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. He placed the stars in the heavens . . . put the iron in the ground . . . made trees and DNA . . . and He said, "Let us make man in our own image." He "subjected the world to futility in hope."

Dinosaurs,
Plate tectonics,
Angels,
Roman Empire . . .

He made them all. And at just the right time He grew a tree somewhere near Jerusalem. He wrapped Himself in flesh, and according to His will He emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave. Confused, ridiculed, and sacrificing everything, He laid Himself down on that tree on Calvary. He put everything in its place: Pilate, Judas, Israel, Rome . . . all according to plan.

And now He hands you a nail and says, "Please don't fear. I'm building an ark to take you home. Give me your sin. Pound the nail. Confess your sin and never forget this nail. And never forget the depth of my love for you, my son, my daughter."

Every time you sin (and every inclination of your old heart is continually evil), whether you confess it or not, I believe you pound the nail. Jesus doesn't want you to sin. But He does want you to look and see His love . . . to taste His suffering . . . so you would believe His love and surrender to Him—be found in Him and let Him take you away.

And then the fire and judgment that falls on this world doesn't destroy you, but it bears you up . . . to the kingdom. It makes you believe the depths of God's love for you in grace, and it conforms you to the image of Jesus in the image of God.

Jesus builds His ark on Mt. Calvary —
ridiculed, confused, and at great expense.
Jesus builds His ark on Mt. Calvary —
with His body broken and covenant blood shed.
Jesus builds His ark on Mt. Calvary —
and we pound the nails.

Yet seeing His love, we love. Receiving His body and blood, we become His body and blood. So all our sufferings born in faith with grace are then sufferings on *His* body—nails in *His* flesh.

So we are the ark He is building, and we help Him build the ark for others when we suffer in His name.

When you give, forgive, and love in His name,
you get to help Him build the new creation.

It's not because He *needs* you;
it's because He wants you to share His joy,
it's because He wants to give you all things, including His heart.
it's because you're being made in His image.

And what is He? He is love . . . “and in this is love that He gave Himself up for us.” The essence of God is to create with self-sacrifice. In a word: Jesus—the Word. We're being made in His image, and in this world we taste His nails.

But soon and very soon the Church—the new Jerusalem—will be caught in a flood of fire and lifted off this earth.

And soon the world we know will be consumed with fire.

And soon the city of God will come to rest forever on Mt. Zion . . . and we will walk out in the new earth and turn around.

And I think God will say, “Children, look! Look what we made! Me and you, son, daughter.” We'll look, and every fear surrendered in faith will be a jewel in the city. Every tear wept in hope will have turned to gold. Every wound born in love will be a pearl, and it will all be 100% grace—a gift. We will enjoy it—appreciate it—see it perfectly.

So we'll fall and say, “Thank you, thank you, thank you for letting me help!” And the angels will watch in wonder, for they will see beings made in the image and likeness of God Almighty.

There is an old story that when God was creating the world—awesome streams, lakes, mountains, sunsets—one little angel stood next to Him and asked, “Why?” (He was a Philosopher Angel.) God kept creating—incredible daffodils, rainbows, crawdads, dogs.

The second little angel stood next to Him and asked, “How?” (He was an Engineer Angel—a Science Angel.) God didn't stop, but made gold, silver, diamonds, pearls, the beaches on the island of Fiji.

The third little angel stood next to Him and asked, “Can I have that?” (He was an Honest Angel.) God didn't stop. He made moms, babies, boys, girls, families, joy. He made love.

The fourth little angel walked up completely amazed and mumbled to himself, “I could never do anything like that.” So he asked, “Can I help?” God stopped, looked up, and said, “Why of course you can, Gabriel.”

I think the story's unbiblical. Angels deliver messages and carry out errands, but they don't create. It should end this way:

A voice asked, "Can I help?" God stopped, looked up, and said, "Why of course you can, Adam. Here's a nail; here's my hand. I create with 100% love."

Well, that's my sermon. I hope you realize it's about far, far more than giving to the building campaign. But nonetheless, it's *at least* about giving to the building campaign. Giving is sacrifice. It cost Noah a lot to build that boat, but it was just about the greatest gift he could ever receive. God let him help.

And it turns out Pastor Greene in Frostburg, Maryland is really on to something. He himself may be a nutcase or a saint . . . I don't know . . . but he's right about this: The church is an ark. A flood . . . of fire . . . *is* coming. And it's not too late to enter. You enter by giving your sins to Jesus and asking Him to be your Lord.

Pastor Greene says God told him to build his church building as a replica of Noah's ark, on the side of the highway where the world drives by, as a sign.

Funny thing is, that's why we built *this* building where we did. And one other reason . . . just before the flood hits, the Lord Himself comes and shuts the door. Only the Lord shuts the door. And in our old building we were effectively shutting the door — the building was too small.

By the way, in the new Jerusalem the doors are always open.

I hope you want to help. Take a nail and hold it in your hand.

"Lord Jesus, you said, 'I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' I think I want to help. But, God, it's scary!—the way you march into Hell and set captives free. But I think we want to help. Amen."

Martin Luther said, "We carry around the nails of Christ's cross in our pockets." In four weeks we'll have a great party at the Adam's Mark Hotel. If you have a problem with that, read Deuteronomy 14. At the party we'll commit money to our building fund, and we'll take a nail and drive it into this beam.

We build the ark every time we love, and if this is your church, I'm asking you to carry a nail with you in your pocket for a month and bring it to the party. When you reach for change, you'll feel the nail, and when you feel the nail you'll ask, like my son Coleman in the basement, "Daddy, can I help?"

It might mean forgiving your wife.
It might mean writing your pledge card.
Whatever it is, it will be love.

Love's as hard as nails,
Love is nails:
Blunt, thick, hammered through
The medial nerves of One
Who, having made us, knew
The thing he had done,
Seeing (with all that is)
Our cross, and his.
-C. S. Lewis

May you be “joined with Him in a death like His, that you may be joined with Him in a resurrection like His.”

Good Friday lasts two or three days. Easter lasts forever. Amen.

Further Reading

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

-Genesis 1:26

The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth--men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air--for I am grieved that I have made them." But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. . . . So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. Make a roof for it and finish the ark to within 18 inches of the top. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks. I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark--you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them." . . . The animals going in were male and female of every living thing, as God had commanded Noah. Then the LORD shut him in. . . . The waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days. . . . Then God said to Noah, "Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives. Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you--the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground--so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number upon it."

-Genesis 6:5-8, 13-21; 7:16, 24; 8:15-17

"The LORD has called you like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God. For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the LORD, your Redeemer. For this is like the days of Noah to me: as I swore that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you and will not rebuke you. For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the LORD, who has compassion on you. O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted, behold, I will set your stones in antimony, and lay your foundations with sapphires. I will make your pinnacles of agate, your gates of carbuncles, and all your wall of precious stones. All your sons shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the prosperity of your sons. In righteousness you shall be established; you shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near you."

-Isaiah 54:6-14

"For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they did not know until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of man."

-Matthew 24:38-39

By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, took heed and constructed an ark for the saving of his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which comes by faith.

-Hebrews 11:7

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit; in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has

gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him. . . . For this is why the gospel was preached even to the dead, that though judged in the flesh like men, they might live in the spirit like God. The end of all things is at hand

-I Peter 3:18-22, 4:6-7a

For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of nether gloom to be kept until the judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven other persons, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomor'rah to ashes he condemned them to extinction and made them an example to those who were to be ungodly; and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the licentiousness of the wicked (for by what that righteous man saw and heard as he lived among them, he was vexed in his righteous soul day after day with their lawless deeds), then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment First of all you must understand this, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own passions and saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things have continued as they were from the beginning of creation." They deliberately ignore this fact, that by the word of God heavens existed long ago, and an earth formed out of water and by means of water, through which the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.

-II Peter 2:4-9, 3:3-6

I have suffered the loss of all things . . . that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

-Philippians 3:8, 10-11

The Son of God suffered unto death, not that men might not suffer, but that their sufferings might be like his.

-George MacDonald

Martin Luther used a graphic figure to depict our responsibility in the death of Christ. He said we carry around the nails of Christ's cross in our pocket. We cringe at the very thought of the crucifixion; we hardly feel responsible for spikes driven through the hands and feet of Jesus. But that is what our sins did. He "was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."

-Doug Webster