

Christians Build Replicas of Noah's Ark

✖ **April 30, 2009** – Replicas of Noah's Ark in Hong Kong and the Netherlands are taking the Bible's message of hope and redemption to a new generation.

In Hong Kong, the three billionaire Kwok brothers in mid-April unveiled the world's first life-size replica of Noah's ark, the *Wall Street Journal* reported. Built to biblical specifications, the vessel will open soon and includes a luxury hotel and 67 pairs of fiberglass animals.

(Photo: Johann Huibers' replica of Noah's ark in Amsterdam has drawn thousands of curious tourists.)

Developed over 17 years, the project reflects Thomas Kwok's Christian faith and was built in partnership with five Christian organizations.

Thomas Kwok and his brothers are heirs to Sun Hung Kai Properties Ltd., once the world's largest property developer by market capitalization.

The brothers would not reveal the project's cost, but their ark sits on 270,000 square feet of a small island in Hong Kong's harbor. It houses a restaurant, exhibition hall and children's museum in addition to the Noah's Resort hotel, the newspaper said.

Although many Chinese are unfamiliar with the biblical story, managers of the Kwoks' ark believe it can offer a message that there will be life after the financial crisis.

"People are experiencing a crisis right now," Spencer Lu, the Kwoks' project director at Noah's Ark, told the *Wall Street Journal*. "It's possible that this financial tsunami has come at this time to Hong Kong for a reason. And our message is:

The doors of the ark are not closed, they're open, and the animals-representing new life-are coming out."

Meanwhile, in Amsterdam builder Johan Huibers' 74-yard ark is serving as an evangelistic tool in the Netherlands.

Constructed of pine and cedar, Huibers' ark has multiple levels, including a deck with a snack area, and offers modern conveniences such as toilets and an elevator. The ark is built on barges welded together, transported using tugboats and has an estimated lifespan of 100 years. Total project costs were just under \$1.3 million.

Huibers opened the ark's doors in April 2007. Since then, some 320,000 visitors have boarded the ark and enjoyed Bible story exhibits, films and life-size polyester animals. Visitors are challenged with a creationism vs. evolution exhibit, a historical timeline and even a display of Jesus' empty tomb.

"I can't make them believers," Huibers said of the ark's visitors. "But I try to make them think. My hope is that they will go read the Bible and that God will speak to them."

Huibers said the idea for the ark began with a dream in 1992 in which the dikes protecting the Netherlands broke, flooding the country. "I believe the water in the dream represented the darkness in the Netherlands," Huibers said. "I knew we had to tell people there is a God."

Soon after the dream, Huibers found a book about Noah's ark and began researching the materials and construction methods. It seemed only natural to Huibers, a commercial builder, to use his construction skills to communicate the gospel. He began building the ark in 2005.

Representatives of Huibers' ark told the *Wall Street Journal* they have been in contact with the Hong Kong team and don't see their vessel as competition because both groups stand for the same goal. The two arks join similar vessels around the

world, including a 300-foot-long ark built by a pastor in Florenceville, New Brunswick, and one Greenpeace built in 2007 on Turkey's Mount Ararat.

Huibers is now working on a second, life-size ark, which is expected to cost \$7.8 million. He hopes to have the vessel, to be housed near Rotterdam, complete in time for the 2012 Olympics in London, after which the ark will tour European and American ports.