

Jonah's Salvation Message

By David Hartsell

You know the story of Jonah; he tried to run from God's command to preach to Nineveh, the capitol of the Assyrian nation. Running from God was futile. The Lord caused a great storm in the Mediterranean Sea to prevent the ship Jonah was on from making any progress. Ultimately Jonah was thrown into the sea and was swallowed by a large fish prepared especially for Jonah. For three days he lived, frightened out of his wits, inside of the great beast and he prayed fervently that his life would be spared. God heard Jonah's prayers and caused the fish to spit him up on dry land with a renewed message to go preach to Nineveh. This time Jonah complied with God's will and the result was remarkable. There are a few things about The Lord's message for salvation that we will explore from *Jonah* chapter three.

First, Jehovah's plan for delivering the message was simple. He instructed Jonah to go and deliver His clear warnings. Jonah might have considered forming a *Nineveh Evangelic Society (NES)* to find the best qualified and most talented preachers to go to Nineveh. Would this have been acceptable to God? No! But why wouldn't it have been? The answer is simple: God told Jonah to deliver the sermon. Today, many "societies" are erected to do the work The Lord gave local churches to do. We are not talking about a "way" to do God's work but a "who" is to be doing the work. The gospel is to be supported and spread by churches and individual saints. This work is not to be turned over, in part or in whole, to human organizations or even another church.

Next, God gave Jonah a simple message. The prophet was to

preach, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" (**Jon.3:4**) How can anyone make the message any clearer? It is impossible to misunderstand! The same can be said for Jesus' gospel. After Jesus' resurrection and just before His ascension, our Lord told His disciples to preach the gospel to the world. "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (**Mk.16:16**) Later Peter preached this very sermon in Jerusalem and about 3,000 were baptized for "the forgiveness of their sins." (**Acts 2:38-41**) Notice that Jonah's message was centered in God's Word not Jonah's personal story. Can you imagine what his message might have been? "Come see the man that spent three days inside a fish." Some today use carnal means to draw people "to church." (Some make appeals based on sports, plays, or meals.) However, our Lord teaches us to draw souls by the simple, but powerful, gospel message. (**Jn.6:44-45**)

Finally, Jonah's message brought repentance. The Ninevites repented wearing sackcloth while they fasted. (**Jon.3:5-7**) The changes in their lives reflected the change in their hearts. The same is true today. "Godly sorrow" produces genuine repentance. (**2 Cor.7:10**) And repentance causes us to obey The Lord in everything — including baptism. One warning is also given in this passage: "the sorrow of the world produces death." God is full of mercy but He is not foolish. The Lord wants us "fighting the good fight" not talking one.



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Thought to Ponder

In the cross is health, in the cross is life, in the cross is protection from enemies, in the cross is heavenly sweetness, in the cross strength of mind, in the cross joy of the Spirit, in the cross the height of virtue, in the cross perfection of holiness.

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Larry Rouse
Evangelist & Editor

The Lord's Supper

By Tom Edwards

It's really ironic: members in the church of Christ are often accused of not believing in the blood of Jesus, while those who make this accusation might observe the Lord's supper only one to four times a year.

As Christians, we realize the need to remember that precious blood by which the atonement was made. Without the Lord's life-saving sacrifice, sinful man would remain in a lost and hopeless condition, heading inevitably to an eternal separation from God Himself.

But now through Jesus Christ and by our faith and obedience, we can contact the blood of the Lord and enjoy the benefits of having our sins washed away and the beginning of a new life in the Christ. Actually, the church itself is the "saved"; and the "saved" are simply those who have been "bought by the blood" of the Savior.

This lesson has been designed to show that the Christian should take of the Lord's supper every first day of the week in order to remember the death of Jesus and be pleasing to God. **Acts 20:7** is the only passage that specifies the first day of the week as being the day in which early Christians met to partake of the com-

Early Christians shared the Lord's Supper every Lord's day. May it be our desire to emulate them in that which we believe and practice. Though some things have ceased, the observance of the Lord's Supper has not; and it is to continue until Jesus Christ returns (**1 Cor. 11:26**).

munion, but this one passage is enough to suffice.

Let us again consider the comments of a few highly regarded men who represent different denominational backgrounds, as to their remarks on **Acts 20:7** and the early church's weekly observance of the Lord's supper. This will clearly establish that the weekly participation in the Lord's supper is not just an "unusual doctrine" only accepted by those in the "church of Christ." (Let us also remember, however, that the quotes of men are never to be the basis for our beliefs in religious matters; but only that which is from God Himself.)

Adam Clarke: "...the Lord's day...in
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which they commemorated the resurrection of our Lord... 'to break bread'... intimating, by this, that they were accustomed to receive the holy sacrament on each Lord's day..."

Albert Barnes: "'to break bread.' Evidently to celebrate the Lord's supper. It is probably that the apostles and early Christians celebrated the Lord's supper on every Lord's day."

Pulpit Commentary: "'to break bread.' This is also an important example of weekly communion as the practice of the first Christians... it is impossible not to conclude that the breaking of bread in the celebration of the Lord's Supper is an essential part of the holy sacrament, which man may not for any specious reasons omit...."

Matthew Henry: "'They 'came together to break bread,' that is, to celebrate the ordinance of the Lord's supper, that one instituted sign of breaking the bread being put for all the rest... In the primitive times it was the custom of many churches to receive the Lord's supper every Lord's day...."

What does the Bible say? In **Acts 2:42**, mention is made that the early Christians "'continued steadfastly'" ("were continually devoting themselves," NAS) in the Lord's Supper. If I told you that I continued steadfastly in doing my dishes; but, in actuality, I washed them only four times a year; you probably would not consider this being "'steadfast."

1 Corinthians 11:20-22, 33, 34 also indicates the frequent observance of the Lord's supper. It reads: "'Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God, and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you... So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you may not come together for judgment....'" The inference is that when they met it was to take of the Lord's supper, which shows it was to be observed quite often; but, unfortu-

nately, they had profaned it by turning it into a common meal -- for this, Paul reprimands them.

In realizing the seriousness of this observance (**1 Cor 11:27-30**), how could one assume that God would allow His children to become lackadaisical with it? to overlook it? or simply minimize it by partaking of it so seldom?

Notice where the emphasis is placed in **Acts 20:7**: "'And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them....'" Commenting on this, Coffman declares: "'This emphatically states the purpose of Christian assemblies on Sundays throughout history, that purpose being for the observance of the Lord's supper... Even the address of so distinguished an apostle as Paul took second billing on that occasion, the primary purpose having been to observe the Lord's supper... The Christians, from earliest times, had the habit of meeting for the Lord's supper on 'a fixed day,' and **Acts 20:7** identifies that day as 'the first day of the week,' Sunday."

Sunday is a "'special" day to the Christian. Though it is true that every day is a day in which one should serve God, Sunday has its special forms of worship. Not only the communion, but also the contribution is to be observed on this day. **1 Corinthians 16:2** reads, "'Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.'" Seldom will one hear any preacher object to the weekly offering of the saints. Actually, many denominations today practice more collections than the Bible authorizes; but without the death of Christ there could not even be any offering from the "'saints."

The communion is a memorial of Jesus Christ; which has not only been instituted by Him, but also made possible by His very death. As the Lord was quoted concerning this supper in **1 Cor. 11:18**, "...do this in remembrance of Me."

Early Christians shared the Lord's Supper every Lord's day. May it be our desire to emulate them in that which we believe and practice. Though some things have ceased, the observance of the Lord's Supper has not; and it is to continue until Jesus Christ returns (**1 Cor. 11:26**).



Scholarly but Practical

By Bill Hall

The preaching of Christ and His apostles was scholarly, but practical. Scholarship was with them a means to an end, never an end in itself. Their goal in preaching was to change men, to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (**Colossians 1:28**).

True scholarship among faithful preachers will tend to conceal itself. It will be hidden behind the cross of Christ and the preacher's own love for the souls of men. The true scholar does not have to call attention to himself. The true Christian will not do so.

No more scholarly work was ever written than the book of Romans. That book, however, is no mere irrelevant discussion of difficult passages that would impress the world with its scholarship. It is practical throughout, as Paul persuades men to seek for salvation, not through a system of law, but through faith in Jesus Christ.

Who would question the Lord's scholarship in His sermon on the mount? The beauty in that sermon, though, is to be found in its simplicity, its applicability, its straight-forwardness, its challenge to the consciences of men. These are qualities

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that have endeared it to its readers and wrought changes in the lives of millions of people.

The Bible abounds in examples of powerful preaching: Moses' "Let my people go," Joshua's "Choose... this day whom you will serve," Nathan's "You are the man," Elijah's "How long will you fal-

ter between two opinions?" Daniel's "You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting," John's "It is not lawful for you to have her," Peter's "God has made this Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ." Those who heard these preachers may not have raved of their scholarship, but they understood what they said, and were never really the same after having heard them.

We do not mean to discourage scholarship; we rather encourage it. No man should preach who has not sought diligently to "handle aright the word of truth." But, when one enters the pulpit, it's time to "reprove, rebuke, exhort" rather than to display brilliance. Scholarly, but practical preaching has always been the need, and it remains the need today.

