

Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate Archangel Michael Church Howell, NJ



February, 2000

Volume1

Issue 2

Touba/ Amshir 1716

The Prophet Jonah

H.H. Pope .Shenouda III



All things work together for good:

Saint Paul the apostle said "...*all things work Together for good to those who love God*" (Romans 8:28); we have also learnt this from the book of Jonah. Even the things which appear to be the source of toil and affliction work together for good. The great fish that swallowed Jonah was also the reason for a great blessing. It was a safe submarine that carried Jonah and brought him near the place of his service. This great fish was also able to teach

Jonah to pray, for we find Jonah, who did not bow to God in the ship, praying inside the belly of the great fish, making vows to God, speaking faithfully, and leaving the great fish to carry out God's Will which he had previously disobeyed.

Do not be afraid if you are the swallowed by a great fish one day. Perhaps this great fish has been sent to for you by God, Who has prepared it for your sake in order to grant you a special blessing. Therefore, remember the words of the Bible, "*all things work together for good...*".

The waves that nearly overturned the ship worked for good. This tempestuous sea, great storm and clamorous, high waves all worked together for good.
(Continued on Page 2)



*When He was 12 they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast when the days were ended and they returned, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem without His parents being aware of it Supposing that He was in the caravan, they traveled a day. then looked for Him They found Him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and His answers
"Luke 2: 42-47"*

(Continued From Page 1)

If it was not for this, the mariners would not have prayed, offered sacrifices or made vows. It guided them to believing.

Likewise, the worm that ate the plant and grieved Jonah was working for good. It did indeed deprive Jonah of the shade, who was struck by the heat of the sun and became faint, but this was for his own good and was a reason that led to Jonah reproaching God, through which his soul was saved.

God is capable of utilizing everything for our own good. He utilized the betrayal of Judas, the envy of Annas and Caiaphas and the cowardice of Pilate, all to fulfill the great work of redemption. It is sufficient that God transforms any matter that falls into His hands to good, even if it is evil. Joseph's brothers sold him as a slave, but God transformed this evil to good. What is important is that we believe in the goodness of God and His works, and His good intervention in matters. That is why the Bible did not only say, "***all things work together for good***", but added, "***to those who love God***".

Indeed, for those who love God, all things work together for them for good. All things do not work together for good for all people. Tribulations come to many people and they grumble, murmur, complain and blaspheme. However, when tribulation comes to a person who loves the Lord, he thinks: 'What is the blessing that the Lord wishes for me from behind this tribulation In this way, all things work together for good for him. There is a beautiful, comforting verse at the beginning of the book of Genesis, at the end of the story of creation, in which the Divine Inspiration says: "***Then God saw everything that- He had made, and indeed it was very good.***" (Genesis 1:31).

Even the great dragon on the land or in the sea, God saw as very good. We can see all things as beautiful with the vision of faith, love and simplicity. Do you think that the mother ape sees its child as being less beautiful than that of a gazelle? Not at all; but if he was transformed into a gazelle she would mourn over him. Sometimes we see matters as being troublesome, since the trouble is from within us. If we are sound from within, then we would be happy with everything, even with the great fish, which swallows us, and with the tempestuous sea, which almost overturns our ship.

God even transformed Jonah's sin in his escape to good. Jonah boarded a ship and escaped from God, so God utilized this escape as a reason for the salvation of the mariners. In the same way, Jonah's stubbornness with God was transformed to good, and so Jonah came out of it with greater knowledge of God and His ways, and with greater maturity in his spiritual life and understanding. He learnt many spiritual lessons from the incidents of the ship, the great fish and the plant.



St. Paul The First Anchorite

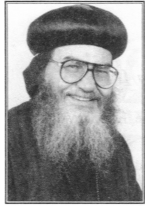
By Joseph Michael



St. Paul was an early Christian hermit, who was born in Thebes, Upper Egypt, around 228 AD. St. Paul is the first well-known Christian hermit. Saint Jerome credits him with being the founder of monasticism. In 250 AD, during the Decian persecution, St. Paul retired to a desert cave, and there lived until his death. Nearby spring and palm trees were all he needed. He sewed palm branches together for clothes, and he lived on fruit and water. In later years, ravens are said to bring him a half a loaf of bread every day. St. Paul had intended to stay there only while the persecution lasted. But by the time it was over, he had

fallen in love with the life of prayer. He felt so close to God. How could he give that up? He decided to stay in the desert and never return to his wealthy city life. Instead, he would spend his life praying daily for the needs of all people and performing penance for sin. There was another holy hermit at the same time named Anthony. St. Anthony thought he was the only hermit. But God showed St. Paul to him in a dream and told St. Anthony to go visit him. St. Paul received in his seclusion St. Anthony. St. Paul was so happy to see St. Anthony because he knew he was going to pass away soon and there was so much to teach. St. Anthony was sad because he did not want to lose his new friend so soon. St. Paul trained Anthony to become his successor in the establishment of the hermit life. But as St. Paul knew, he eventually passed away around 341 AD at the age of 113. St. Anthony buried St. Paul in a cloak that had belonged to St. Athanasius. St. Anthony later took home with him and treasured the garment of palm leaves that St. Paul had been wearing. He never forgot his wonderful friend.

May the Blessings of St. Paul the Anchorite and his beloved successor St. Anthony be with us all Amen.



BIBLE STUDY

H.G. Bishop Moussa
Bishop for Youth

METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY



There are many methods of Bible study, for the Bible is a wide ocean. No matter how deeply we delve into it, we can grasp only a little. There is no doubt that there are highly specialized methods of Bible study. However, we will deal here only with the methods that suit us as beginners.

1- The Practical Method:

This is the most important method, and it is convenient for both the educated and the simple-minded. In this method, we simply read the Bible, understand God's commandments mentioned in it, and ask God to give us the grace to fulfill these commandments. For example, when I read the verse, "If your brother sins against you go and tell him his fault between you and him alone" (Matthew 18:15), I hurry to my friend who has sinned against me and tell him his fault with love, winning him over once more. On reading the verse, "Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation" (Matthew 26:41), I actually organize my life and start to be regular in praying honestly, so as not to enter into temptation. When I hear the Lord say, "Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already

committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28), I ask Him with tears to purify my look so that it may be sacred, and so on.

For me the practical method is the method that our forefathers used at the time when the Bible was not yet printed and the manuscripts were very few, but through their obedience to the commandments, they became saints. They even became living Bibles, moving among people and winning many to Christ. Saint Anthony, on hearing the deacon read one verse in the church, went and sold everything he had and followed Christ, and consequently became a blessing to the whole world and to all generations.

2- The Contemplative Method:

This method is important and satisfying. In it, one reads some verses and repeats them to oneself calmly and deeply, then starts to talk to God through these verses, expressing his thankfulness if they happen to speak about God's work with us, humility if they convict him for his sins, or his joy in the Lord if they explain to him God's love for the human soul, as in the case of the Song of Songs-

For example, when one reads, "Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:97), one starts to say to God, 'You are worthy, O Lord, to be loved, because You redeemed me and

prepared for me a precious salvation and a happy eternity. Yet, I am poor because my love for the world, the flesh and for people many times deprives me of You. When will You be loved even to the depths? When will Your name be my meditation all day? When will I always say the prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me." Lord Jesus Christ help me. Lord Jesus Christ, I praise Thee." Thus, the soul is nourished by the words of the Bible, these words turn into prayers, and these prayers turn into satisfaction and power.

3- *The Analytical Method:*

This method also is important because, when we read the word of God without understanding, it becomes less useful to us, whereas when we understand it and study it deeply it is easy to be satisfied and filled with it.

In this method, we study the passage in question with depth and analysis. For example, one might read the Epistle to the Romans without understanding what is meant by it, because it is necessary to study an introduction to this epistle, talking about its purpose, subject and divisions, as well as its main ideas, and thus, one will start to understand. One can then go deeper into the studies by reading a book that explains this epistle, followed by a different book on the same epistle, and so on. This is an analytical study of the epistle, of a theme or a character in it. In this way, one goes deeply into the study of the satisfying word of God. The Fathers and commentators have written millions of pages explaining the holy Bible, and the door is still open for hard workers.

These three methods are to one another. Thus, it is advisable to apply them in

our lives in the following way:

1- Every morning, read one chapter from the Old Testament and meditate upon it, using it in talking to God (the 'contemplative method'). Then, pick up a specific commandment and try to apply it throughout the whole day (the 'practical method').

2- In the evening, read a number of chapters of the Bible, or some commentaries, so as to develop a profound idea of the Holy Bible gradually (the analytical method').

Know Your Church

By: John Sharobiem

Deacons

A deacon is a servant of the altar as well as of the congregation, A bishop must consecrate him. There are three ranks of servants and they are: Sub-deacon, Deacon and Arch-deacon

There also exist two preliminary ranks and these are: Cantor (Epsaltor) who learns and, participates in the hymns of the church and Reader (Ognostos) who may take part in the liturgical readings.

A deacons service garments consists of A long white vestment (tonya), decorated with crosses symbolizing angelic purity. and Over the tonya is worn a patrashel which is a long red sash symbolizing wings, again portraying the deacon as an angel.

ASK our Priest

Selected by Ihab Guirguis

Q: What is the difference between the Orthodox church and Jehovah's Witnesses ?

A: Jehovah's Witnesses are not Christians and are not attributed to Christ; that is, they do not call themselves Christians. They are attributed to Jehovah, one of the names of God in the Old Testament. This is evidence that their doctrine has a Jewish influence, proving their belief in the Sabbath.

- The Jehovah's Witnesses' translation of the Bible is called the *New World Translation of the Scriptures*. In this translation they try to alter the Holy Bible to suit their teachings.
- They believe that Christ is a god, but not God. This is the reason why they alter John 1:1 and say that the Word was a god'.
- Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe that the spirit is everlasting; they do not even agree with the existence of the spirit and they see, as do Seventh Day Adventists, that when a person dies, that person neither senses, nor feels, nor knows; having neither life nor consciousness. Here, the words of our Lord to the repentant thief in Luke 23:43, "*Assuredly I say to you: today you will be with Me in Paradise*" stand against this teaching.

GAMES AND FUN

Selected by Sam Guirguis

PARABLES OF JESUS

1. Upon what did the wise man build his house?
2. Where Should we not put a lighted lamp?
3. How many sheep did the shepherd leave to find the one lost one?
4. What did a woman sweep her house to find?
5. The rich fool said, “ eat, drink, and

A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel

“Luke 2:32”

Church Activities



1) St. Paul's Teachers Prep Class will have a skiing trip on February 20, 2000. The bus will leave the Church parking lot at 5 AM and will returned at 8 PM., for further information please contact Laura Michael 363-2261.

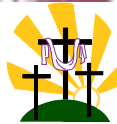
2) The Church Fund Raising Committee is selling a variety of Egyptian groceries. To place an order please contact Mrs. Randa Michael 905-0878

The Church Bulletin Committee welcomes your participation in the form of articles, reviews, news, or comments. Please contact Fr. Antonious by fax at 821-1512 .

Social News



The Church Congratulates Rania and Mamdoh Georgey on their blessed marriage.



“Please do not forget to pray to the Lord that He may heal the sick and repose the souls of those who have passed away among us in the paradise of joy ”

In next Month's issue:

“Ask the Priest” by George Mankabady
“Know Your Church” by Christine Michael
“The Saint of the Month” by Mina Nagib.
“Games and Fun” by Mark Girguess

Church Services

February, 2000

Friday February, 4

- 7:30 PM-8:30 PM; Hymns Lesson
- 8:30 PM-8:45 PM; Prayer Meeting
- 8:45 PM-9:30 PM; Bible Study

Saturday February, 5

- 8:30 AM-11:30 AM, Divine Liturgy
- 11:30 AM-12:30 PM Christmas Party

Friday February, 11

- 7:30 PM-8:30 PM; Hymns Lesson
- 8:30 PM-8:45 PM; Prayer Meeting
- 8:45 PM-9:30 PM; Bible Study

Saturday February, 12

- 8:30 AM-11:30 AM; Divine Liturgy
- 11:30 PM-1:00 PM; Sunday School & Youth group meeting

Friday February, 18

- 7:30 PM-8:30 PM; Hymns Lesson
- 8:30 PM-8:45 PM; Prayer Meeting
- 8:45 PM-9:30 PM; Bible Study

Saturday February, 19

- 8:30M-11:30 AM, Divine Liturgy
- 11:30;PM-1:30 PM; Sunday School & Youth group meeting

Friday February, 25

- 7:30 PM-8:30 PM; Hymns Lesson
- 8:30 PM-8:45 PM; Prayer Meeting
- 8:45 PM-9:30 PM; Bible Study

Saturday February, 26

- 8:30 AM-11:30 AM, Divine Liturgy
- 11:30 PM-1:00 PM; Sunday School & Youth group meeting

COPTIC FEASTS

- February 10 ----- St. Paul The First Anchorite
- February 16 ----- Presentation of the Lord into the Temple
- February 20 ----- Commemoration of The Archangel Michael
- February 21 ----- The first day of Jonah's Fast
- February 24 ----- Jonah's Feast