

***Board the right plane and fly safely.*** ( Jon 3:1-5,10; Mar 1:14-20).

\* Isn't it true, none of us would like to miss a flight while on a trip unless it will crash later. If we want to be fine with flying on schedule, we ought to listen to the old adviser who said, *Better an hour early, stand and wait than a moment behind time.* However, sometimes even this rule may not help as for example in the case of a man who missed his flight. It says that he arrived at the airport an hour in advance of his flight. After that he went ahead on to the ticket counter where he got his boarding pass. Next, he checked his suitcase in plenty of time to get it on the proper flight with him, and then he sat down with a magazine in the lobby waiting for the time to board. Since this was his first chance to relax all day, he closed his eyes for what he thought would be a ten-minute "cat nap." He rested his eyes right through the first, second, and final boarding calls for his flight. When he awoke, a quick glance at the clock on the wall snapped him back to reality. The flight had taken off without him.

\* The man in the illustration had been called thrice until the boarding was over. As usual, the time to get on board is measured by twenty minutes or so. But the man had not shown up even after the third boarding call; finally, the gate was shut leaving that passenger without a hope to be on time and in a place where he liked to be. Such a story is not common, but it can happen with each of us. In this connection we invented the rule using the old advice along with a new one. Here it is, *Better an hour early, stand and wait watchfully than a moment behind time.* After all, follow this rule along with our wish – *"Board the right plane and fly safely."*

\* Marching in one-step with the given lesson, the Scripture warns us about the possibility of missing a much greater opportunity to be on time and in a place where all Christians are dreaming to be. Saying this, we mean the ancient people who had missed the great opportunity to inherit eternal life as the result of their persistence in all form of sin. It is the well-known, and unforgettable misfortune of old, yet, it is not the fiction because it was recorded in the Bible. Accordingly, there were one righteous Noah, seven members of his family, and a certain number of creatures. They had boarded the ship (Gen 7:13) built to order. As soon as all passengers entered the ark, God himself shut the door. By this He had prevented anyone else to get on the board after arriving the mighty waters.

\* The record says that on the 7<sup>th</sup> day after the shutting of the door, a light rain announced the coming of the catastrophe. Imagine, with each new hour the rain increased in power getting heavier and heavier so that those outside the ark could barely take a breath of fresh air. There was no chance to escape the deep water because of the heavy rain on top of the waters gushing from the ground. The doom continued forty days and forty nights until all the mountains disappeared under water, if not to mention all of the living beings. Yet, the terrifying waters didn't destroy the Noah's ark. When waters returned back, the eight passengers

including two of kind of birds, livestock, beasts, and swarming creatures set their feet on the dry land; Thereby, Noah became our father after Adam; through him we are all given the great opportunity to inherit the new life.

\* The Scripture keeps silent about people who didn't enter the ship. It seems they laughed at and exposed to ridicule Noah and his project while he was building the ark. But when the Flood happened, they stopped playing jokes on Noah. We cannot even imagine the feeling of the heart of the righteous man Noah when he heard again and again the plea for mercy: "Master, please open the door, save at least our children, for we are perishing." The Scripture doesn't say anything *of the death-struggle; we hear not the cry of despair; we are not called upon to witness the frantic agony of husband and wife, and parent and child, as they fled in terror before the rising waters. Nor is a word said of the sadness of the one righteous man who, safe himself, looked upon the destruction which he could not avert. But an impression is left upon the mind with peculiar vividness from the very simplicity of the narrative, ...* (Bible History: Old Testament. Database - 2004 WordSearch Corp.) *And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights, (7:12). And all flesh died that moved on the earth, ... God blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark, (7:21-23).*

\* It is believable that God would not have destroyed the ancient world if its people had repented. Amazingly, God tolerated the people's corruption and their violence for about two thousand years, and His last response to the severe situation was giving a 120-year-long last chance. Along with the successful preaching of repentance by Jonah in Nineveh, we have an example of the extra ordinary preaching through the shipbuilder Noah. It is amazing in what way it was done. What would you think of a person who had started the costly project by building a superliner far away from an ocean? After that, would we set up jokes, or what? It was with Noah, but despite all jokes and gags, he had built two things, - a super ship and a graphic illustration of God's message for repentance. Nothing can be more powerful than a proclamation of a huge boat on dry land in addition to Noah's persistence to finish the project within 120 years! In this instance Noah's character serves as a living example of obedience to God in sharp contrast to the disobedience of the proud people who have rejected God by their deeds. It is the answer why there was no an extra boat for the crowd and no a helper, even for their little ones.

\* 2000 years after the doom of the wicked, the Almighty again has called the world to repent. During this period God manifested Himself and was proclaimed many and many's the time. He had chosen Abraham to be a father of Israel - the Messianic nation. He gave to Israel the Law and the land. However, 2000 years

after the flood, the world was seen a corrupted as much as in the time of Noah. Then, would God destroy the world again even though the time is fulfilled? It says that with the coming the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, the world was not set in fire; on the contrary, it got a credit. Jesus began mastering the new ark of salvation along with the proclamation of his kingdom as the most secure place where people will find shelter from the impending destruction of the world. In the language of symbols, God's kingdom can be imagined as Noah's ark where Jesus is its captain. During the 120 years, Noah had proclaimed the way to salvation that was grounded in Jesus. Thanks be to God, for the new life, way, and truth we've found in Jesus. He was proclaimed and believed by many. Yet, the proclamation is still on its way for the rest, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel," (Mar 1:15).

\* The OT reading of this day is about repentance and the good news, (Jon 3:1-5,10). The people of Nineveh are a good example of how it works. As soon as they heard about the impending doom, they turned from their evil way. In return, God revoked His sentence of their evil, and He did not destroy the people of Nineveh, (v.10). That was good news for them, and who read their story for themselves. For God promises the salvation to all people who will turn from their evil ways and believe in His Son Jesus Christ. There is no other rule or prescription on how we can enter the ark of salvation. But the time of proclamation is coming to the end, it can be over at any time, even tomorrow God may shut the door. The people who have still postponed their repentance should be alert, especially on hearing the final boarding call. Be sure, with the death of an unrepentant sinner the door of the ark of salvation will be shut, and there will be no way to enter it. *For the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed,* (2Pe 3:10).

All things have their own time, as well as the time of my preaching. Now it is over. But the time of the great opportunity is not over yet; .... *repent and believe in the gospel,* (Mar 1:15).

Dear friends, conduct yourselves wisely toward what you've heard, making the best use of your time.

Doing this we will not miss our flight.

Amen