

# GRACE GAZETTE

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*Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.*

*Hebrews 12:12-13*

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## THE CAPTIVATOR

*Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them. Psalm 68:18*

Few events which occurred in the life of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, as HE sojourned in this Earth, were any more startling to HIS disciples, than HIS ascension back into the heavens, from whence HE came. They had traveled and conversed with HIM for approximately three years. In that time, they had seen HIM turn water into wine, heal cripples and lepers, give sight to the blind and cause the deaf to hear. They had stood outside of a tomb in which Lazarus's putrefying body lay and seen him come forth from that sepulcher at the command of the LORD, still wrapped in grave clothes, but completely and wonderfully alive. They had seen HIM command the winds and waves to cease their roaring and heard HIM completely confound the wisest and (in their minds) most holy men who sought to confound HIM. Not to mention, feeding thousands of people with a few loaves and fishes and gathering more food that was left over than when they began.

They had beheld HIM taken into captivity by the very men who sought to confound HIM but were confounded on every occasion. They saw HIM beaten, crucified and slain by their wicked hands. They had sulked away in disappointment, grief, fear, and no doubt, shame. All that they had expected to occur now seemed like a mere pipe dream and their hopes for the establishment of an Earthly kingdom now faded from view. I am sure they probably second guessed their commitment to follow this PROPHET who they viewed as their DELIVERER from the oppression of the Romans. Frustration is probably an apt and yet, inadequate description of their state of mind.

These apostles were both astonished and frightened as they were told by the women that HIS body was no longer in the tomb. "*And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.*" (Luke 24:11) Filled with curiosity, both John and Peter both rushed to see if this report was possibly true. Peter, being his bold and impetuous self, rushed into the burial chamber where HIS body had lain and believed that indeed HE had been taken away. "*Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.*" (Luke 24:12) I find it very interesting that the LORD appeared to Peter (at some point in time) revealing HIMSELF as risen from the dead before HE did to any of the other apostles. This was recounted by the travelers on the road to Emmaus as they reported having supped with HIM. "*Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.*" (Luke 24:34) Paul also mentions this, "*he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve.*" (1Cor 15:5) This same Peter who had denied knowing HIM with an oath. This same Peter whom the angel instructed the women to specifically inform. "*But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee.*" (Mark 16:7) Here the mercy and grace of our LORD towards unworthy sinners upon whom HE has set HIS eternal love is demonstrated. HIS ways are past finding out.

They were astounded when HE appeared in their midst in the upper room with the doors having been locked. Thomas, being absent, heard their report yet believed it not. Oh, how humbled he was by the same mercy and grace as the LORD appeared to them once again while he was present and invited him to touch HIS hands and side. The LORD will make HIS people willing in the day of HIS power and will seek and save that which is lost. Be not faithless but believing. Thus, once again HE

was with HIS disciples from time to time over a forty-day period after HIS resurrection. No doubt they were greatly comforted, yet still somewhat perplexed, as they wondered about how HE would establish HIS Kingdom in the Earth. *“Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”* (Act 1:6) HE told them that the coming of HIS Kingdom “with power” would be seen, soon, as they were instructed to wait at Jerusalem. *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”* (Acts 1:8) Imagine with me their utter astonishment and complete amazement as HE immediately removed HIMSELF from their midst and ascended into Heaven. They could do nothing but stand with mouths agape, gazing into the heavens. They were startled back to reality, when the Angel spoke asking them why they were staring at the clouds, when they had been given a command and the assurance that if HE went away HE would come again. *“Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”* (Acts 1:11) In essence he told them to quit daydreaming and be about the business which HE commissioned them to do.

We read that in HIS ascension, *“HE led captivity captive”*. There are several ways in which we might look at the import of this statement. Not the least of which is the obvious description of HIS utter and complete triumph over all of HIS enemies. HIS enemies are HIS people’s enemies and HE would never leave nor forsake those whom HE has loved with an everlasting love. It is for HIS people that HE came into the world to accomplish redemption. In order to do so HE entered into battle with the condemnation of the Law as well as the powers of darkness which had completely enveloped those who were by nature the children of wrath even as others. Yet HE would not give them over to a reprobate mind but would enter into a great conflict of blood and death in their behalf.

When we read HIS answer to the question posed in Isaiah’s prophecy, *“Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?”* (Isa 63:2), we see that HE was stained with HIS own blood for the remission of HIS people’s sin, (without the shedding of blood there is no remission), and that of HIS enemies as well. *“I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.”* (Isa 63:3)

We see that HE has “led captivity captive”, as HE has set HIS people free from the curse of the Law which breathes out slaughter to all who are under it. *“For the wages of sin is death.”* Paul declares the freedom of GOD’s people from this Law of sin and death, which had them bound in chains of captivity, when he says, *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”* (Rom 8:1-2) None can be justified nor sanctified by the Law. *“the Law is not of FAITH.”* “Free from the law, oh happy condition, JESUS hath died and there is remission.” The captives are captivated by the CAPTIVATOR.

HE has “led captivity captive” as HE does call HIS people from darkness to LIGHT. This is the message that Peter boldly proclaimed on the Day of Pentecost. *“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”* (Acts 2:39) In every generation HE has raised up HIS people to declare HIS mighty works as the SAVIOR of sinners. In every land, HE has a witness unto the glory of HIS redemption. They all share in the common FAITH which is begun as they are called from darkness to LIGHT by the work of HIS SPIRIT in them. *“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”* (2Cor 4:6)

HE has ascended on high, where HE ever lives to make intercession for HIS people. It is from this high and lofty throne that HE bestows HIS favor upon HIS elect bride. Giving her gifts that edify her and bring glory to HIS name. *“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for (i.e. unto) the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”* (Eph 4:11-13) Have you tasted of the grace of the CAPTIVATOR? mam