

## **"... He Led Captivity Captive ..."**

*"But unto each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith 'when he ascended on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men.'* (Now this, he ascended, what is it but that he also descended into the lower part of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended far above the heavens, that he might fill all things). And he gave some to be ..." (Eph. 4:7-11a). *"But unto each one of us was the grace given."* The thought which follows this phrase enlarges upon gifts given to men by Christ and the word *"but"* at the beginning of the phrase tells that the subject of grace has been discussed previously. It is true that Paul wrote in chapter three of a grace he received, which grace was his apostleship, a grace not shared by all. The grace of our passages was given to *"each one of us,"* which links back to the apostle's appeal that Ephesians should *"walk worthily of the calling they were called with"* (4:1). The grace of salvation is a gift from Christ to all who accept His call and for Christians to walk worthily of it, they must walk with lowliness, meekness, longsuffering and forbearance, AND must give diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; recognizing and honoring the seven items that foster unity: one body, spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism and God. But the gifts of Christ were not confined to the gift of salvation. For the care and growth of His people, other gifts were needful and given. Thus he writes, *"Wherefore he saith, when he ascended on high he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men."* That quotation is from Psalms 48:18; a passage which at first appearance has no reference to the Messiah, but which, from the inspired writer's use of it, had such an application.

*"Christ led captivity captive."* What is this *"captivity"* which Christ led captive? It seems that the captivity led captive by Christ is the Hadean world which receives and holds captive all the disembodied spirits of both wicked and just men. From this prison no spirit has permanently escaped save one: Christ Jesus. Of this the Hebrew writer wrote, *"Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also in like manner partook of the same that through death he might bring to naught him who had the power death, the devil, and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage"* (Heb. 2:14f). Christ, in His appearance to John, when he gave him his visions on Patmos, said, *"I have the keys of death and Hades"* (Rev. 1:18). That this is Paul's thought for he said, *"Now this, He ascended, what is it but that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth?"* (Eph. 4:9). When Christ *"led captivity captive,"* He *"overpowered death."* Hades is entirely subject to Him and someday He will release all her captives, releasing them from the chain of death. Again Paul speaks of Christ's victory in this way: *"the last enemy that is to be subjected to him is*

*death” and thus “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory, O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law: but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:26; 54b-57). “And he gave some to be ...”* These words introduce the gifts Christ gave, the citing and examination of which will occupy our next article.

Jim McDonald