

Leading Captivity Captive

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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*. (*Psalms 68:18*)

But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (*Ephesians 4:7-8*)

The above two passages are used to support the idea that the Lord Jesus Christ went to “paradise” or “Abraham’s bosom” upon His death on the cross and freed the people held there awaiting His death as they are now justified and can enter heaven. The statement made is that the Old Testament saints had to wait there for Christ to be sacrificed so they could be made righteous and enter heaven.

However, as can be seen by the previous exposition concerning God’s veracity and promises, this explanation cannot possibly stand the test of true Scriptural reason. For this to be the case, it would mean that there existed some question in the mind of God concerning the accomplishment of the atonement upon the cross by the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, let’s look at what the verses are addressing since the main article demonstrates that the Old Testament saints were never in any “holding tank.”

To begin with, the only spiritual thing that is ever described as being a prison in which one could be held captive – is sin. In John, chapter eight, we are given the following by the Lord

Jesus Christ:

Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. (*John 8:34*)

This is reinforced in the letter to the Galatians, in which the apostle Paul plainly states that we all, when we are (or were) lost, we were in bondage to the elements of the world, or the law, of which the strength of sin is the law.

Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. (*Galatians 4:3-5*)

Now, we do see plainly in the Scripture, that there is one who is all about sin. In fact, he is the author of sin. ((By the use of the term "author of sin" it merely means that he was the very first to sin.)) Moreover, he delights in the fact that people sin and rebel against God. This individual is Satan, or the Devil. In Isaiah, chapter 14, we see that it is Satan who is a captor. In speaking of Satan's judgment, the Lord tells us that part of His condemnation of the Devil, is the fact that Satan is unwilling to allow anyone to be free from sin and its devastating effects.

They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, *and* consider thee, *saying*, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; *That* made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; *that* opened not the house of his prisoners? (*Isaiah 14:16-17*)

Thus it is evident that the captives in the prison are those who are dead in their sins and iniquities. Captivity then, would be sin and its ability to hold one in bondage. This is, of course, what the Scripture teaches about sin and its effects. The Lord Jesus Christ, by His work on the cross, gave all those who trust in Him freedom from sin and its ability to

hold one in slavery. This is confirmed by I John 3:9, which states:

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. (*I John 3:9*)

And again in II Corinthians:

Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. (*II Corinthians 3:17*)

And finally, the Lord Jesus Himself told the Jews in John 8:36:

If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. (*John 8:36*)

All of which plainly states that the Lord Jesus Christ took the captivity of sin, captive, destroying its power. Along with the destruction of sin's power to enslave, He destroyed the effects of sin, which are death and Hell.

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