

SET THE CAPTIVES FREE

According to Luke's Gospel, soon after Jesus endured the temptations of Satan, he entered a Nazarene synagogue and stood up to read. There were those in the audience who knew him, recognizing him as the son of Joseph. Jesus was brought the book of Isaiah, he turned to what we now know as chapter 61, and read:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19).

After reading these words, our Lord sat back down. Every eye was fixed upon him, their hearts amazed at the things he had said. Even as the questions and doubts formed in their minds, Jesus gave a rebuke:

"And he said unto them, Doubtless ye will say unto me this parable, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done at Capernaum, do also here in thine own country. And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is acceptable in his own country. But of a truth I say unto you, There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land; and unto none of them was Elijah sent, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian" (Luke 4:23-27).

He knew this people would not respect one of their own. So it was, they became angry and sought to throw him out of the city.

The passage Jesus selected to read at this early point in his ministry holds great power for us today. The thread of redemption is apparent in every phrase. The poor, the brokenhearted, the captives, the blind, the bruised - all were

in need of help in the most desperate way. Notice how Christ was to correct the problem *fully* in each case.

1. The gospel would elevate the poor from the deprived state of sin to become "sons of God" (Rom 8:14). Christ was sent to heal the brokenhearted so that they would be able to love and to be alive spiritually. "*Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted*" (Matt 5:4).
2. By him, the captives would hear the message of deliverance and would learn that they could be "free indeed." "*If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed*" (Jn 8:36).
3. The blind would regain their sight (this often was literally fulfilled by the hand of Christ: Matt 9:30, 11:5; Jn 9:11).
4. He was also sent to "set at liberty", or to set free, those that are "bruised", or those who are brokenhearted, or "pressed down" by calamity. This could mean many different things – sinful patterns of addiction may be broken, mental anguish may be relinquished, or simply that we may be freed from a burden of guilt. Jesus came to set the captives free!
5. In the phrase "acceptable year of the Lord" we can sense the Savior planting the seed that he was the Messiah, and that the privilege of salvation by his blood would soon come to man. This would save us from the ultimate suffering – eternal separation from God.

Does it surprise you? Does it move you that Jesus would begin his public ministry with such a profound passage from Isaiah? The hope for us contained in his words should lead us to praise him for his mercy and grace. The promise of freedom should instill in us the passion to try and try again to overcome our weaknesses. The salvation alluded to should comfort our souls. And all of this came at a time when in the eyes of the people of Nazareth, he was only the son of Joseph.

CHAD PRINCE
Oxford, AL

CAN YOU BE TRUSTED?

Told by the angel Gabriel that he and his wife would have a son, Zacharias expressed doubt based on their advanced age.

"And Zacharias said to the angel, 'How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years.' And the angel answered and said to him, 'I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings'" (Luke 1:18-19).

But implicit in his comments was a lack of trust in Gabriel himself. The angel responded with the simple statement, *"I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God."* No appeal to evidence; no attempt at persuasion. Just a simple declaration of his position before God. That alone was enough to ensure that the messenger was absolutely trustworthy.

Were Gabriel a liar, God would have banished him long before. But his continued presence before God indicated that he must have been truthful, as none but the truthful can stand in God's presence.

Consider the implications of that for the character of believers today. If we know God, we are to be like him.

"Seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue; whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in that world by lust"(Pet. 1:3-4).

"Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is" (1 John 3:2).

As He is faithful and true, we must be faithful and true.

"And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God:" (Rev. 3:14).

"And I saw the heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon called Faithful and True; and in righteous he doth judge and make war" (Rev. 19:11).

"And he said unto me, These words are faithful and true: and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angels to show unto his servants the things which must shortly come to pass" (Rev. 22:6).

Wouldn't it be something if the claim, "I am a Christian" were enough to establish one's integrity!

Yet that is far from the case today. For example, how many "Christian businesspeople" bring disrepute to the name of Christ by failing to pay their bills, abusing contracts, performing sloppy work, or making excuses rather than fulfilling commitments?

What a tragedy! If Gabriel's confident statement is any indication of the integrity that should mark God's workers, then it ought to be that one need only be identified as a Christian to erase all doubt. Of all the people, Christ's followers should pursue and unimpeachable reputation for integrity.

From the *The Word in Life Study Bible*, p. 1763
Copyright 1993, 1996 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.
Used by permission

COMPARISON OF KATRINA TO THE END OF TIME

In late August, hurricane Katrina came ashore in gulf coast a couple of hundred miles from here in the coastal areas of Mississippi and Louisiana, resulting in hundreds of deaths and unimaginable property damage. The intensity of this storm was predicted and warnings were broadcast days before landfall. People had time to evacuate, but hundreds stayed and died. Some of the deaths were people who were unable to get out of the area because of health or lack of transportation, but many deaths resulted from people simply determined to stay in spite of the warnings. One could not help but compare this tragedy to the end of time. Now is the time for us to prepare for the end. Heed the following warnings in the scriptures and don't let death catch us unprepared:

"As therefore the tares are gathered up and burned with fire; so shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth" (Mat. 13:40-42).

"He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death" (Rev. 21:7-8).

"Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (Joh. 5:28-29).

THANK YOU

On October 6, 2005 it will have been one year since the automobile accident that resulted in the death of Ray McManus, the man who began and published *The Harvester* for almost nineteen years. Ray did not realize the impact of this little publication. It took his death for us to see the value of *The Harvester*. Ray worked tirelessly on this paper, providing most of the financing and work. He continued this publication through several relocations, job changes, job losses, and birth of children. He rarely requested assistance with the publication. Only one time, during a particularly stressful new job, do I remember him considering ceasing the publication. He quit the job but continued *The Harvester*. Until 1997, Ray typed *The Harvester* on a typewriter. He tediously counted the spacing on each line to make the print justified. Preparing *The Harvester* to mail was also difficult during the first few years, because the Postal Service required packets to be sorted by zip-codes and zones. *The Harvester* we continue to publish is much easier to produce. It is typed on a computer, emailed to the printer, and no sorting is needed for mailing.

Upon the anniversary of Ray's death, it seems an appropriate time for Ray's family to thank all of you who have helped us through this difficult time. Thank you for all the prayers, thoughtful words and gestures. One of the greatest sources of comfort this past year has been continuing the publication of *The Harvester*. We want to thank those who have made financial contributions to the paper: Taylor's Cross Roads Church of Christ, West Broad Street Church of Christ, Mt. Carmel Church of Christ, Napoleon Church of Christ, Fayetteville Rd. Church of Christ, Denson Dunlap, Catherine Messer, Myrtice Linsey, Daniel Shirey, Lily Sandusky, Winton and Marta Carson, Joe and Clara Young, and Bill Lutrell. Of equal importance are those who have contributed countless hours editing and preparing *The Harvester* to mail: Luree Benefield; Mark, Renae, Leslie and Scott Carpenter; Phillip Carter; Breanna Chandler; Harry Cobb; Allan, Thelma, Jonathan and Jennifer Daniel; David and Brenda Daniel; Jeanette Herren; Sarah Holmes; Mike Kirby; Lesa McElroy; Ray and Ana McManus (Ray's parents); Lottie Murphy; Mike Strain; Marie Strain; and Dwight and Jeanette Thomas. Special thanks also to Tommy Yarbrough, of Yarbrough Commercial Printing and David Mariano, Woodland Post Master. *The Harvester* greatest need is for articles. Thanks to all those who wrote articles this past year: Harry Cobb, Allan Daniel, Mark Carpenter, Chad Prince, Donald Thompson, Edward Herren, and Tim Eldridge. Forgive us if you have contributed in any way and your name was omitted. It has been a stressful year. Please continue to remember us in your prayers.

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
Oct. 10 - 14	Oak Grove Church Eubank, KY	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
Oct. 13 - 16	Marrow bone, KY	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
Oct. 21 - 23	Lamar, CO	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)
Oct. 28 - 30 7:30 p.m. (EDT) Fri. -Sat. 11:00 a.m. & 6:00 p.m. Sun	Valley Church of Christ Valley, AL	Brad Prince (Wedowee, AL)

Oct. 28 - 30 7:30 p.m. (EDT) Fri. -Sat. 10:30 a.m. & 1:30 p.m. Sun.	Antioch Church of Christ Douglasville, GA	Bill Prince, Jr. (Oxford, AL)
Oct. 28 - 30	Verona Church Verona, KY	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN) & Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Because of whom did Pharaoh give Abram many gifts?
2. In the tabernacle, where was the place where the Lord would meet the priests?
3. According to Lamentations 3, what attribute of the Lord never ceases?
4. To what reptile does David compare the tongues of evil men?
5. What happened to the idol beside which the Philistines placed the ark of God?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Who did Philistine King Achish appoint as his bodyguard for life? DAVID (1 Sam. 28:2)
2. Where did the prophet Daniel look to find the number of years Israel would be in exile? JEREMIAH (Dan. 9:2)
3. According to 1 Peter, what will love cover? A MULTITUDE OF SINS (1 Pet. 4:8)
4. According to Psalm 34, who is close to the brokenhearted? THE LORD (Psa. 34:18)
5. What did the Kinsman remove when he gave Boaz permission to buy Naomi's land? HIS SANDAL (Ruth 4:8)