

Receiving and Giving Gifts

Introduction

1. As soon as man sinned, he was desperately in need of a Savior.
 - a. Sin separated man from God and the tree of life. (Genesis 3:22-24; Isaiah 59:1-2)
 - b. Sin brought forth death. (Genesis 2:15-17; Romans 6:23; James 1:15)
2. Even before the foundation of the world, God had made provision for a Savior. (1 Peter 1:17-20)
 - a. At the time of man's sin, God announced that the Savior, the "Seed" of woman, would "bruise" the head of Satan. (Genesis 3:15)
 - b. Later God told Abraham that it would be his "Seed" that would be Savior and bless "all families of the earth." (Genesis 12:1-3)
 - c. The prophet Isaiah foretold of the Savior some 700 years before He would come to earth.
 - 1) He would be born of a virgin thus fulfilling the prophecy of Genesis 3 that He would be the "Seed" of woman. (Isaiah 7:14)
 - 2) He revealed that "a Child" would be born, "a Son" given. (Isaiah 9:6)
 - d. The prophet Micah prophesied that the Child would be born in "Bethlehem Ephrathah." (Micah 5:2)
 - 1) That Child would be "born of a woman." (Galatians 4:4)
 - 2) That Child would be "Seed" of Abraham. (Galatians 3:16)
3. Throughout the centuries God had led the course of history so that by the time of the New Testament everything was prepared for that Savior, His only begotten Son, to come into the world. (Galatians 4:4; 1 John 4:9)
 - a. The words of the prophets had been given.
 - b. John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, had been born.
4. Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, was born of the virgin Mary in a stable in Bethlehem Judea in the days of Herod the king. (Luke 2:1-11)
 - a. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger. (v. 7)
 - b. An angel announced His birth to shepherds who were out in the fields near Bethlehem. (vv. 9-11)
5. As important as the birth of Christ is to God's scheme of redemption, the Bible does not mention any special day to be set aside as a memorial of His birth.
 - The Scriptures do not even reveal when Christ was born.
6. The religious observance of the birth of Christ was not practiced until the fourth century A.D.
 - a. Its origin as a religious holy day is attributed to Liberius, Bishop of Rome (352 -366 A.D.) considered by Catholics to be one of their early popes, who ordered that December 25th be adopted as the date to observe Christ's birth.

- b. Why December 25th?
- 1) The choice of this date was probably influenced by the fact that December 25th was the day on which the Romans celebrated the Mithraic feast of the sun god.
 - “December 25 was already a festive day for the sun god Mithra and appealed to the Christians as an appropriate date to commemorate the birth of Jesus, the ‘Light of the World.’” (*The Lincoln Library of Essential Information*)
 - 2) The Roman Saturnalia, the feast which celebrated the winter solstice and commemorated the dedication of the temple to Saturn occurred at this same time.
 - “The indications are that the church in this way grasped the opportunity to turn the people away from a purely pagan observance of the winter solstice to a day of adoration for Christ the Lord. Both St. Cyprian and St. John Chrysostom allude to this thought in their writings.” (*Collier’s Encyclopedia*)
7. It is not Christ’s birth that Christians are commanded to memorialize by a sacred feast.
- a. The Scriptures authorize public proclamation of the Lord’s death every first day of the week until He returns. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)
 - b. His birth was not the only thing necessary for our salvation.
 - 1) His life, death, burial, resurrection and ascension were all essential to effect God’s eternal purpose. (Galatians 4:4-5)
 - 2) Consider that the announcement of Christ’s birth to Joseph was in terms comprehending the total mission of His life which culminated in His death. (Matthew 1:18-23)
 - 3) The Scriptures focus upon the death of Christ as the culmination of His coming, not His birth. (Romans 1:3-4)
8. Christians today are to look upon December 25th as they do any other holiday designated by the government or custom.
- a. We, therefore, have neither church “Christmas” parties nor special religious services on December 24th or 25th.
 - b. We accept Christmas as a legal holiday and, individually, we might observe the customs associated with it
 - But that is a matter of personal liberty to be determined in our homes.
9. The fact that we do not make a special observance of the birth of Christ does not mean that we regard it as unimportant or unnecessary.
- Quite the contrary for without the birth of Christ we realize prophecy would have been unfulfilled, we would still be in our sins, and we would have had no example for us in the flesh.

10. One of the customs or traditions of this time of years is the giving and receiving of gifts.
 - a. Giving itself is not wrong.
 - b. In fact, the Bible places great emphasis on giving.
 - 1) God is the giver of every good and perfect gift. (James 1:17)
 - 2) God gave His Son. (John 3:16)
 - 3) Jesus gave Himself to die. (Ephesians 5:25)
 - 4) God wants His people to be a giving people. (Ephesians 4:28)
 - 5) Jesus, as quoted by Paul, stated the principle that it is “more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35)
11. This lesson will focus on the gifts revealed in Scripture that God has given us and the gifts we are to give one another.

I. The Gifts of God

- A. God has given us many gifts. (Matthew 7:11)
 1. Life. (Acts 17:25)
 2. His providential care. (Acts 14:17)
 3. Our daily bread. (Matthew 6:11)
 4. Every good and perfect gift. (James 1:17)
- B. His Greatest Gift: His Son
 1. Out of love He gave us His only begotten Son for our salvation. (John 3:16)
 - “Only begotten.” “One who was unique; there was none like Him. From monogenes, and is used in the sense of relationship...In the sense of an unoriginated relationship, a relationship which did not begin when God sent Christ but which eternally was. Jesus ‘possesses every attribute of pure Godhood.’” (W.E. Vine)
 2. The sending of Jesus into the world reflects:
 - a. The greatest love. (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:9-10)
 - b. The greatest purpose—that the world might be saved through Him. (John 3:17)
 3. Jesus is, therefore, God’s “indescribable gift.” (2 Corinthians 9:15)
 - a. It is beyond the vocabulary of words to properly describe that gift. How do you describe:
 - 1) The glory Jesus left to come to the earth?
 - 2) The pain and suffering Jesus experienced on our behalf?
 - 3) The magnitude of the love of God to send Him?
 - b. Jesus is indescribable in His:
 - 1) Person. (Isaiah 9:6)
 - 2) Condescension. (Philippians 2:6-8)
 - 3) His glory. (1 Timothy 3:16)
 - c. Apart from Jesus Christ there is no salvation. (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 John 5:11)

C. The gift of salvation.

1. Man's problem is sin. (Romans 3:10, 23)
 - a. Sin separates one from God. (Isaiah 59:1-2)
 - b. The wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23)
2. God's solution to the sin problem and man's need for salvation is plainly presented in Scripture.
 - a. Jesus Christ. (John 3:16)
 - b. The gospel of Christ. (Romans 1:16)
 - 1) The gospel involves the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)
 - 2) The gospel must be obeyed. (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9)
 - c. Even though the gospel must be obeyed, salvation is a gift. (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9)
 - 1) Some of God's gifts are conditional.
 - aa. Compare Matthew 6:11 to 2 Thessalonians 3:10.
 - bb. Compare Romans 6:23 to 1 Peter 4:17.
 - 2) God's conditions for salvation must be met in order to receive His gift but it does not mean that one ever earns or merits that gift.

II. Gifts We Are to Give

A. Parents to children.

1. A knowledge of God. (Ephesians 6:4; Deuteronomy 6:7)
2. Good examples to follow. (2 Timothy 1:5)
3. Proper discipline. (Proverbs 13:24; Ephesians 6:4)
4. A good name. (Proverbs 22:1)

B. Children to parents.

1. Obedience. (Ephesians 6:1)
2. Love and respect. (Ephesians 6:2)
3. Attention. (Proverbs 4:1)
4. Reason to be proud of you. (1 Samuel 8:1-5)

C. Husbands and wives to each other.

1. Love. (Ephesians 5:25; Titus 2:4)
2. Respect. (1 Peter 3:6-7)
3. Assurance of continued fidelity. (Hebrews 13:4)

D. Christians to each other.

1. Love. (John 13:34-35)
2. Respect. (1 Thessalonians 5:13; James 2:1-5)
3. Encouragement. (Ephesians 4:29; Hebrews 10:24)

4. A worthy example to follow. (Philippians 1:27)
 5. "A hand up."
 - a. There are times when brethren will need material assistance. (James 2:14-17; 1 John 3:17-18)
 - b. There are times when brethren will need spiritual assistance. (Galatians 6:1-2; James 5:19-20)
 6. Hospitality. (1 Peter 4:8-10)
- E. Christians to the world.
1. Love. (Galatians 5:14)
 2. A good example to follow. (Matthew 5:13-16; Philippians 2:15)
 3. The gospel of Christ. (1 Peter 3:15; 2 Timothy 2:2; Acts 8:4; Mark 16:15)

Conclusion

1. For many people, this is regarded as "the season for giving."
 - a. Not all giving is properly motivated for much of it, on the scales of eternity, has no lasting value.
 - b. The giving discussed in this lesson has lasting value.
 - 1) The gifts God has given us will last until time is no more.
 - 2) The gifts we give to others can last throughout eternity if our lives and hearts are right before God.
2. Gifts imply two things—a giver and a receiver.
 - a. Eternal life is the gift of God, the Giver. (Romans 6:23)
 - b. The gift of eternal life can only benefit us if it is received and that involves obedience to the gospel of Christ.
3. Why not make this a day and time of rejoicing by giving your life in obedience to Jesus Christ and His gospel?