

THE GREATEST CHRISTMAS GIFT

John 3:15-21

What was your favorite Christmas present? Chances are that very question may prove to be challenging since many of us have enjoyed so many Christmases and so many Christmas gifts.

To one person it may be that “diamond ring” that involved engagement and a soon coming wedding. To another, it may involve money, or something else material. Regardless of the gift, there was no enjoyment of the gift until it was first unwrapped.

For some the curiosity of the gift is so powerful, that Christmas involves a “sneak preview” at the soon to be opened gift. One thing that young and old alike understand is this...a present must be unwrapped to be enjoyed, and appreciated. Sadly, however, to countless thousands who have received the gift of salvation, they fail to unwrap the wonderful gift of God, given through Jesus Christ, and enjoy salvation.

Many are saved and have the ultimate gift of God in Jesus Christ living within them, but they fail to understand and enjoy the gift of a relationship with Christ. Many fail to fully appreciate all that the Father has given them, and the relationship that is readily theirs through the sinless life, death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

1. WHAT IS THE GREATEST GIFT OF ALL TIME? The Bible makes it clear in one verse, namely John 3:16, that God in heaven had such a love for the world and for man’s sinful condition that He was willing, and desirous to give His One and only Son to come to earth for the sins of man, in order that if anyone would place their faith in Him, they would receive the forgiveness of their sins, and have eternal life in heaven.

While thousands can quote this verse, sadly many treat this verse like an “unwrapped gift”, not knowing that receiving this gift can and will change their lives. The very fact of Scripture is that there is a God in heaven who doesn’t want to see a single person perish. (2 Pet.3:9). Because God is holy and man is sinful, there is no way for man to approach God apart from a perfect sacrifice being given for the sins of man. That is precisely what God did. Though man sinned, and lived as he desired, God in heaven looked at the life of man, all man,

and didn’t desire to see a single person separated from him. To provide an offering for sin, God had to allow His one and only Son to come into the world...there was no other way under heaven.

While many question the love of God from time to time, the truth of Scripture is this...man sinned, man separated himself from God through sin...yet God took the initiative to give His Son. Not only did God give His Son, but God would place the entire sins of our lives and transfer them onto Jesus and punish, scourge and put Jesus to death for our sins.

The fact is, while many enjoy gifts at Christmas time, the very first Christmas would result in the death of Jesus...as our sin offering. Why? Because sin must be paid for before a holy God! Though sin must be paid for...God Himself took the initiative in love to make for us a sin offering. In fact that is the very first Christmas gift...a sin offering because we are sinners. And the wonder of this gift is that all we have to do is “believe in” and “receive it”. The greatest gift of all time, last not for days, weeks, months, but for all eternity, because God is eternal and His life is eternal, all who believe have “eternal life”.

2. WHAT DOES THE ULTIMATE GIFT...SALVATION INCLUDE? Sadly, like an “unwrapped present” many live their entire lives never fully unwrapping the gift that God has given them in salvation.

First it involves God Himself. The very story of Jesus born in a manger, is the story of God the Son laying aside royalty, position, to take on the form of a baby. In reality God became flesh, put on skin, just like we are in, to know us, understand us, and to experience hunger, thirst, temptation, tiredness, fatigue. Imagine the thought of God becoming a man, yet remaining fully God. Yet, that is Jesus. Though a baby, He was remained divine, because that is the nature of God. The fact that God would come in the form of a man reveals the horrible plight of man.

Second, it involves a Savior. The Bible announces loud and clear that there is a Savior born in the city of David, who is Christ the Lord. (Lk. 2:11) There is a Savior because humanity needs rescued. The decree from the Creator of the universe declares that “the soul that sinneth...it shall die”. There is no way of getting around that we are sinners. God knows that for He watched Adam and Eve in the Garden

as they sinned against Him. The fact is “sin” removes one from life with God. When Lucifer the angel of God sinned against God, he was removed from life with God, and all who choose to reject Christ, will be removed from life with God. Yet, in the very person of Jesus, because He is an infinite being, He was able to take an infinite amount of punishment for the sins of the entire world. In the ultimate gift of Jesus and salvation, there is provided for man a “Savior” from death, a “Savior” from banishment apart from God.

Third, it provides complete pardon of all sins. When a criminal is pardoned, the law no longer considers him guilty. He is free to live life, without the penalty of imprisonment. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He died for us, in our place, and to all who place their faith in Christ, there is full and free pardon...meaning that God NEVER holds us guilty of any sin that we have ever committed or will ever commit. Why? Because Jesus death paid for our sins permanently, completely, and eternally! It was in Jesus that all of our sins were placed, in his body, and by His stripes we are healed. (See 1 Pet. 2:24)

It can be said this way, all of our sins were placed “INTO” Jesus and upon our faith all of Jesus was placed “INTO US”. The glorious gift of salvation means we never are left to “beg” for forgiveness. Why? Because the blood of Jesus pardoned us at the cross!

Fourth, it provides continual forgiveness. The Bible makes it clear in 1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The reality is, God is All-knowing and He knows we live in a sin torn world, where there is a real devil, and demons on the face of the earth, and we also live in a body that is “sin” torn. Confession is “owning up to” our sins, and naming them before Holy God. While He can read our minds, and knows all we have done, the fact is we are a free will individual, and confession is the point we admit our sins. Confession renews us, refreshes us, and reminds us, that Jesus has paid for our sins in full. Regardless of what you have done, all that is required is confession.

Fifth, there is access to the Father. For the child of God, our Father runs, rules, and operates the world, and through salvation, we have access to the God of all creation. “Access” means we have available entrance. We have not only entrance, but we have the

RIGHT to ask powerfully and boldly. Why? Because He said we could, and we can take Him at His Word. Sadly, we often fail to “have” because we fail to ask.

Sixth, we have a personal relationship with the Creator of the universe. To the world God is some “Being” out there somewhere. But to the believer, He is our Father. Father, includes relationship, friendship, provision, protection, and so much more. In truth, He makes it His business to “watch over” the totality of our lives because we are His. When Christ died, the Bible declares that temple veil was rent, revealing that man has been given through Christ a relationship with God, the Creator, the Sustainer, the Sovereign of the universe.

Seventh, it provides for us the person of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that guides us in understanding the Bible. It is the Holy Spirit that “indwells” us, and gives us the “proof” that one day we will be with God in heaven.

Eighth, it provides the Good Shepherd. Jesus is not only our Savior, but He is our Good Shepherd, to all who are true believers in Jesus Christ. A shepherd in the Old Testament, would protect the sheep, care for the sheep, guard the sheep, and do whatever necessary, because he loved the sheep. Jesus makes it His business to provide protect, guide, love, and care for us. He has a way of delivering us out of intense situations when we least expect it. He comes to our rescue often in the nick of time, when there is nowhere else to turn. Why? Because “we are His”!

Ninth, it provides us with an Intercessor. Often times there are events in life for which we have no words, and we don’t know how to pray. It is at those moments that Jesus prays for us, and prays to the Father on our behalf. The Father hears us, because Jesus paid our sin debt.

Tenth, it provides us with a Friend. Jesus is not just our Savior, but He is also a friend. To the early disciples He called them “friends”, and so are we. He loves us, and loves our openness and honesty.

Eleventh, it provides for us a resurrected body and an eternal home. In truth, there is only one type of person that is contented truly in the world, it is the child of God. Because He knows who he belongs to and he knows where he is going. Not because he deserves it but because of the fact God gave the greatest gift in all the world...the gift of His Son from heaven to earth for the sins of mankind.