

1 Gift Giving

Jn. 4:7-10

Introduction:

1. Gift giving seems to have been prolific in ancient societies, just as it is in our society.
2. In the ancient world gifts were presented not only in one's immediate family to mark such family events as a betrothal, marriage, birth or death, but gifts were also presented to superiors in political and religious hierarchy and to the palace and to the Temple.
3. Gifts were often given to God as tokens of faith and dependence. In some idolatrous societies gifts were given to the gods in an attempt to make the gods favorable toward the gift giver.
4. But here in this text Jesus does something different. He refers to "the gift of God." He makes God the giver instead of the recipient of the gift.
5. What does the Bible say about the concept of gift giving? Is it different or similar to gift giving in the ancient world of Judaism? Is it similar to or different from gift giving in the culture of the Greek and Roman world associated with N.T. times?
6. In Rom. 6:23 Paul speaks of the "free gift of God," eternal life.
7. And in Rom. 5 he speaks of the "free gift." If he is not seeing Christ as the free gift, he certainly implies that Christ secured the "free gift" of salvation by the giving of His life.
8. Is the concept of gift giving in our society the same as in the Bible?
9. I propose a study of gift giving as it relates to the Bible. (I expect several lessons.) I hope that we can learn something both about being gift givers and about being recipients of gifts, especially those gifts given us by God.

Discussion:

- I. The word "gift" renders a number of Hebrew words in the O.T. with various nuances of meanings.
 - A. The KJV renders "gift," for twelve different Hebrew words. The four most frequently used are:
 1. "Minchah" (4503) – sometimes translated "offering," "gift," "present," "tribute."
 - a. It is used in Judges 6:18 when God commissioned Gideon to deliver Israel from the Midianites.
 - b. Gideon said, "Please do not depart from here, until I come back to You, and bring out my offering and lay it before You." Gideon brought a food offering and God consumed it with fire from the rock on which Gideon had placed it.
 2. There are two other terms that stem from the same root that is the common Hebrew verb meaning "to give."
 - a. In Num. 18:7 ("nathan" 5414) it is used of God's giving the priesthood to the Levites.

- b. It is variously translated in English with a wide range of meanings.
- 3. The third Hebrew word (7810 “shochad”) while translated “gift” in the KJV is translated “bribe” in the NASB.
 - a. It is used in Ex. 23:8: “You shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of the just.”
 - b. This indicates that “gifts” can be given with the expectation of benefit to the gift giver. “I will give you this gift, but then I will expect you to do something for me.”
- 4. A fourth Hebrew word (8641 “terumah”) is frequently translated “contribution” in the NASB.
 - a. In Ex. 25 God commanded that Israel raise a “contribution” for the construction of the tabernacle.
 - b. In Ex. 36 it describes how they contributed so much that Moses restrained them from giving any more (v. 6).
- B. Already, just in the survey of the use of these terms, we learn something about gift giving in the O.T.
 - 1. Sometimes gifts were given to God.
 - 2. Sometimes gifts were received from God.
 - 3. Sometimes gifts were exchanged between men.
 - 4. Sometimes gifts were given with expectations attached.

II. In the N.T. the KJV renders eight Greek words with the English word “gift.”

- A. Of these occurrences only three basic roots are represented.
- B. The most frequently used in Greek is “didōmi.” It means simply to “give.” Two N.T. nouns are derived from it.
 - 1. “Doma (1390).” “Doma” is used in Matt. 7:11 speaking of God’s willingness to give good gifts. “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!”
 - 2. “Dosis (1434).” “Dosis” is used in James 1:17: “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.”
- C. Another verbal root is “dōréō (1433).” “Dōrea” (noun) is used in Jn. 4:10.
 - 1. It appears in Mk. 15:45 where the body of Jesus is given to Joseph of Arimathea.
 - 2. It appears again in 2 Pet. 1:3 where God’s divine power has given to us everything pertaining to life and godliness.
 - 3. Two nouns come from this root.
 - a. “Dōron (1435)” meaning “gift,” or “present” and often used of offerings. In Matt. 2:11 the wise men came to baby Jesus and presented gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

- b. “Dōrēma (1434)” is used in Rom. 5:16a. In a comparison between what happened in Adam and what has happened in Christ it says, “The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned . . .”
- D. Another root word is “charisma (5486).” In the N.T. it is restricted entirely to the spiritual realm of God’s blessings.
 - 1. It involves both physical and non-material blessings.
 - 2. It is used in Rom. 5:16b of the “free gift” associated with justification. In this context “dōrēma” and “charisma” describe the same gift. One is translated in the NASB simply “gift,” the other as “free gift.” Cf. Rom. 5:15-17.
- E. These different terms are used of gifts given by men, but also gifts given by God. In fact, the emphasis in the N.T. is on God’s giving of gifts to men.

III. “If you knew the gift of God . . .”

- A. What is this gift that Jesus refers to?
- B. There are a variety of ways to understand this.
 - 1. Jn. 3:16 says that God gave His only begotten Son. Is Jesus referring to Himself as the gift of God? He certainly is “a gift” of God and given His role in God’s plan of redemption it is easy to see Him as “the gift” of God. “And who it is who says to you . . .” may suggest that He is the gift or it may suggest that He is the source of the gift.”
 - 2. It would be easy to conclude that eternal life is the gift of God.
 - a. Jn. 3:16 could be used as evidence.
 - b. Jn. 3:35 also.
 - c. The “living water” that is the source of “eternal life” (Jn. 4:14) could lead us to conclude that the gift of God is eternal life.
 - d. Rom. 6:23 says, “The free gift of God is eternal life.”
 - 3. One might conclude that the Spirit is the gift of God.
 - a. Jn. 3:34 says, “He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure.”
 - b. Acts 2:38 refers to the gift of the Spirit.
 - c. In Ezek. 36:26 God said, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.”
 - 4. There is the gift of salvation, the gift of redemption, the gift of reconciliation, the gift of justification.
- C. But perhaps we are trying to be too specific.
 - 1. B. F. Westcott said, “The gift of God’ is all that is freely offered in the Son” (The Gospel According to John, p. 69).
 - 2. Perhaps in this context we need to think of “the gift of God” as God’s willingness

to give.

a. Jesus drew attention to God's willingness in Matt. 7:7-11.

b. Paul too in Rom. 8:31-32.

3. If we comprehended this we could easily ask for "living water" and He would give it. Indeed He has!

Conclusion:

1. In this study we have surveyed the primary terms associated with gift giving in Scripture.
2. We have raised some questions that hopefully we can answer as we proceed in the study.
3. Today, we have assembled in recognition of God being a gift giver. We assemble in celebration in light of God's gracious spirit. We praise and thank Him for His graciousness, and so one of our most powerful motivations has to do with what God has given us.
4. Recognizing God as gift giver affects our relationship with Him. In fact it draws us to him.
5. If you are so drawn to Him perhaps you would give yourself to Him this very day.