

THE UNOPENED GIFT

INTRODUCTION

Do you like to receive gifts? Most women do. Some can't hold back their excitement; they rip off the wrapping as fast as they can.

Others like to play with the package and try to guess what's inside. They shake it to see if it rattles; they sniff it; they try to figure out it's weight. They do everything they can think of to get clues as to what it is.

But did you ever know anyone who received a gift and was so sure she knew what was inside she didn't even bother to unwrap it?

That's the way a lot of Christians act. They know they've received the gift of salvation. But they're so sure the package contains only their "ticket to heaven" and nothing else that they've never even unwrapped the package and taken a good look at what's inside.

OUR STUDY

When we are born again, we know we are saved from sin. But is that all being saved means? You may be surprised to learn that it means many more things. We don't have the space here to talk about all of them, but we can look at some of the more important ones.

The Scripture: Luke 1:68, 69, 71

"Blessed - praised and extolled and thanked - be the Lord God of Israel, because He has come and brought deliverance and redemption to His people! And He has raised up a Horn of salvation (that is, a mighty and valiant Helper, the Author of salvation) for us in the house of David His servant. That we should have deliverance and be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all who detest and pursue us with hatred." (TAB)

1. What do these verses praise God for?

We can understand most of these ideas, but let's look at this word, *redemption*. Redemption, or to be redeemed, means to be bought, to be removed from bondage and set free.

The Scripture: Colossians 1:13,14

"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."

2. This verse tells us from what we were rescued (redeemed). What was that?

Jesus had to redeem us because before we were saved, we belonged to someone else. That someone else was Satan, and we were his slaves. By dying, Jesus bought us for His Father, God, and He delivered us from this kingdom of darkness and death ruled by Satan.

3. Where did He bring us?

God's kingdom is a kingdom of light and life.

The Scripture: Ephesians 1:4,5

"...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will."

We might be apt to think that after we belonged to Satan, God saw our suffering and decided to rescue us, but that isn't what the Bible says.

4. When did God choose us?

5. What did He predestine us to be?

Scripture tells us that even before the world was created, God had this wonderful plan to save us and adopt us as His own children. But that's only part of the story.

The Scripture: Romans 8:16,17

"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."

6. This scripture says: If we are God's children, we are also His _____.

The Scripture: Romans 8:15

"For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.'"

7. As sons and daughters what does God want us to call Him?

Just think about it! It wasn't only God's plan to adopt us, but to make us co-heirs with His Son, Jesus. And all of that is just a part of our salvation gift. Maybe you wonder why God went to so much trouble for us. You see, our adoption wasn't just a legal act. The Father really loves us. He loves us so much that He lets us call him, "Abba," which is a very personal name Jewish children called their father, much as we call our father, "Daddy."

As if all of this weren't enough, along with our becoming part of a new family, we received another bonus, another part of our gift.

The Scripture: 1 Peter 2:11

"Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul."

8. What does Peter tell us we are in the world?

Peter calls us sojourners and pilgrims because when we became part of God's family, we also became citizens of His country. Although we still live on earth, we don't belong here anymore. We are really citizens of heaven.

We need to keep unwrapping because we still haven't reached the bottom of our salvation package.

The Scripture: Romans 8:30

"Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."

9. This verse tells us that along with being predestined, we were called and _____.

What does it mean to be justified? When God justified us, it's as though we had already been on trial and acquitted.

A Bible teacher has another very simple way of explaining it. He says that before we were saved, it was as though we had a big debt of sin. You could say we owed the Bank of Heaven a lot of money. When Jesus saved us, that debt was cancelled, but although we no longer owed anything, we were still penniless, spiritually. Then God put all of Jesus' righteousness into our account. That was like making us spiritual millionaires.

Everything we receive when we're saved isn't ours right away. Much of our actual gift is being kept in heaven for us, and we're going to have to wait till we get there to see it all. However, the Bible does give us some hints about it.

Shortly before Jesus died, He talked to His followers about the future.

The Scripture: John 14:2,3

"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

10. Where did Jesus say He was going?

11. Why was He going there?

12. What else did He promise?

13. Why?

Part of our gift is spending eternity with Jesus and the Father. Let's see what else the Bible has to say about our present.

The Scripture: 1 Peter 1:3,4.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you."

14. What two things has God given us?

15. What do we know about our inheritance?

We have an inheritance that is being kept safe in heaven for us. Unlike the inheritance people receive on earth, whose value is affected by the economy, natural disasters, and age, our inheritance can never die, spoil or fade. We don't know what all that inheritance is but from what the Bible tells us it's pretty wonderful.

The Scripture: 1 Corinthians 2:9

"But as it is written: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.'"

16. How is our inheritance described?

Do you have trouble believing that God has really given us all these wonderful things and that He'll keep all these promises? You can trust Him, you know, and He's even given us a special guarantee.

The Scripture: Ephesians 1:13,14

"...the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory."

17. What is God's guarantee?

When we are born again, God's own Spirit comes to live in our heart, to help us become the kind of daughters God wants us to be, and also to be a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance. What a wonderful Father we have, and a wonderful present he gives us when He saves us.

Don't you think it's time you tore off the wrappings from God's present to you and looked at it closely? If you need any help using your present, the directions are in any Bible.

THE ANSWERS

1. He has brought deliverance and redemption to His people, raised up a Horn of salvation that we might have deliverance and be saved from our enemies and those who detest us. 2. The power of darkness. 3. Into the kingdom of the Son of His love. 4. Before the foundation of the world. 5. Holy and without blame in His sight. 6. Heirs. 7. Abba, Father. 8. Sojourners and pilgrims. 9. Justified and glorified. 10. To His Father's house. 11. To prepare a place for us. 12. He will come back. 13. To take us to where He is going. 14. He has begotten us and given us an inheritance. 15. It can never become corrupted, be defiled or fade away. 16. Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man what God has prepared. 17. The Holy Spirit.