

END-TIMES ISSUES

#10 Understanding gifts.

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1

At this time of year, people tend to focus on gifts and gift-giving.
This issue fits well with our End-times focus on Israel – though you may have to wait for another time to see how.

We'll be looking at various types of gifts, and issues related to gifts.

The concept of "gift" includes both "physical" and "non-physical" things.

2

We'll be looking at this concept in its widest sense.
It's *more* than the giving and receiving of wrapped presents (illustrated by these pictures).
It can include just about *anything* we have been given or have received.
As such, gifts can be physical or spiritual, visible or invisible, from God or from people, etc.
Even abilities and opportunities can be called gifts.

The concept of "gift" includes both "physical" and "non-physical" things.

3

First, a look at GOD'S gifts.

⇒ **Spiritual blessings** of all kinds.

...the **gift** of the **Holy Spirit**.

Acts 2:38b (BSB)

... the **gift** of **righteousness**...

Romans 5:17b (BSB)

... the **gift** of God is **eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23b (BSB)

For it is by grace you have been **saved through faith**, ... it is the **gift** of God ...

Eph 2:8 (BSB)

⇒ **Spiritual gifts** – which provide opportunities for us (people) to bless each other.

Also instructions on how to use them.

With regard to **spiritual gifts**, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.

1 Co 12:1 (NET)

4

- Spiritual blessings and gifts are **from God**; they are available to all who are willing to accept them.
We must be willing to *first* repent of our sins, since the *world's* ways are incompatible with *God's* ways.
- **We do not deserve them**, but God offers them to us.
- They are **from God alone**. They are not something that we humans can give to other people.
But we *can* show others the way to the *God* of these gifts! We can share the Good News with them!

⇒ **Jesus**, who made these spiritual blessings possible, was a gift to us.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is **given**, and the government will be upon His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6 (BSB)

5

⇒ God may also give us **physical blessings** of many kinds.

[To some] ... God **gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy**, ...

Ecclesiastes 2:26b (NET)

It is a **gift** from God to be able to **eat and drink** and **experience the good** that comes from every kind of hard work.

Ecclesiastes 3:13 (GW)

- Physical blessings and gifts are **from God**.
- **We do not deserve them**, but he often gives them to us *in spite of* what we deserve. (They are not something that we are guaranteed; they are not automatically entitled to us.)
- **These blessings are temporary**. We lose them all at death (if not sooner).
- Many of them are things that **we (humans) can give to (or share with) other people**.

6

The contrast between OUR gifts and GOD'S gifts.

⇒ God's gifts are *always* good.

Every good and perfect **gift** is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

James 1:17 (NIV)

⇒ Our gifts may be *good*; but God's gifts are *much better*.

Even though you're evil, you know how to give good **gifts** to your children. So *how much more* will your Father in heaven **give** good things to those who ask him?

Matthew 7:11 (GW)

7

When we consider gifts and abilities, there are two "forgotten" concepts we need to look at.

⇒ Forgotten because:

- ✓ We just don't think about them.
- ✓ They're not what we want to hear.
- ✓ We suppress them when we prefer to sin by not doing them (Romans 1:18).

⇒ These concepts are: **ACCOUNTABILITY** and **RESPONSIBILITY**.

- ✓ Each of these words has a range of meanings, and they sometimes overlap.
- ✓ We are going to use them this way:
 - "**Accountability**" – referring to the fact that we will someday have to answer to God for our choices.
 - "**Responsibility**" - referring to our obligations toward people – how we choose to use our gifts and abilities.

8

⇒ We are **accountable** to God for *everything* we do, say and think.

- ✓ In his Word, God has shown us how to live. He has also embedded some basic moral concepts in the hearts of all.
- ✓ All people will be judged, based on the truth they know (and perhaps on truth they "*would have known*," if they willfully suppress the opportunity to know).

For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.

It is written: "As surely as I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow before Me; every tongue will confess to God."

So then, each of us will give an **account** of himself to God.

Romans 14:10b-12 (BSB); quote based on Isaiah 45:23.

Excuses will not work.

... so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held **accountable** to God.

Romans 3:19b (BSB)

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⇒ We have **responsibility** to do, say and think *everything* in a way that honors God and is beneficial for other people.

- ✓ In his Word, God has shown us how to do this. He has also embedded some basic moral concepts in the hearts of all.
- ✓ At the Day of Judgment, *excuses will not work*.

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, **do it all for the glory of God.**

Do everything in love.

1 Corinthians 10:31; 16:14 (NIV)

We are **RESPONSIBLE** to do *all things* in a way that honors God. At the Day of Judgment, we will give **ACCOUNT** for all that we have done.

We will be held **ACCOUNTABLE** for the way we have (or haven't) fulfilled our **RESPONSIBILITIES**.

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This is a serious matter!

⇒ These concepts do not apply *only* to Christians!

- ✓ Even people who *reject* the Bible will someday give account to God for what they did with the gifts, abilities, and possessions that God gave them.

⇒ The way we use what we have *now* will in some way influence what we have in *eternity*.

Whoever can be trusted with small things can also be trusted with big things. Whoever is dishonest in little things will be dishonest in big things too.

If you cannot be trusted with worldly riches, you will not be trusted with the true riches.

Luke 16:10-11 (ERV)

(Jesus also told several parables about this issue.)

11

NOTHING on earth is permanently ours.

- ✓ We should view *physical gifts* as being on loan. (*Spiritual blessings and gifts don't belong to this category.*)

HOW MUCH is permanently OURS?

[Job] said, "When I was born into this world, **I was naked and had nothing.** When I die and leave this world, **I will be naked and have nothing.**"

Job 1:21a (ERV)

HOW MUCH belongs to GOD? (1)

[David, praying to God...]

"**Everything** comes from you."

1 Chron. 29:14b (GW)

[God says...]

"... **all the animals** of the forest are mine, and I own the **cattle** on a thousand hills. I know **every bird** on the mountains, and **all the animals** of the field are mine. ... **all the world** is mine and **everything in it.**"

Psalms 50:10-11, 12b (NLT)

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HOW MUCH belongs to GOD? (2)

Remember that the **sky**, the **highest heaven**, the **earth and everything it contains** belong to the Lord your God.
Deuteronomy 10:14 (GW)

In his hand are **the deep places of the earth**, and **the mountain peaks** are his.
The sea is his. He made it, and his hands formed **the dry land**.
Psalm 95:4-5 (GW)

Also mentioned in:
Exodus 9:29; 19:5;
1 Chronicles 29:11;
Psalm 24:1-2; 89:11;
1 Corinthians 10:26.

Everything under heaven belongs to me!
Job 41:11b (GW)

HOW MUCH belongs to GOD? (3)

The **silver** is mine, and the **gold** is mine, declares the Lord of Armies.
Haggai 2:8 (GW)

[God says...]
"Look, **every life** belongs to me. The **life of the father** is like **the life of the son**—both belong to me."
Ezekiel 18:4a (CSB)

--- [God said to Israel...] ---

[Probably representing *all* the tribes.]
Gilead is mine.
Manasseh is mine.
Ephraim is the helmet on my head.
Judah is my scepter.
Psalm 108:8 (GW); also 60:7

The land must not be sold permanently, because it is **Mine**, and you are but foreigners and residents with Me.
Leviticus 25:23 (BSB)

[Also, all firstborn males (human or animal) belonged to God, because he spared them when he killed the Egyptian firstborns – Exodus 13:2;34:19; see also Exodus 13:12-15.]

WHY don't people pay attention to the fact that God own's ALL?

Reason #1 – Sin. It is *natural* for us to suppress this truth.

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.
Romans 1:18-19 (NIV)

Reason #2 – Ignorance. We must let Scripture *change* the way we think, before we can know the truth and learn how to live by it.

[You must] be transformed by the renewing of your mind.
Romans 12:2b (NIV)

RESTRICTIONS on our use what we have been given.

⇒ **WE are NOT free to do as WE please**, with no regard for how our actions effect others.
✓ This type of attitude will be especially prevalent in the "last days," before Jesus returns.

Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and **following their own desires**.
2 Peter 3:3 (NLT)

(Many of the following characteristics apply to one's use of gifts and abilities.)

There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God ...
2 Timothy 3:1b-4 (NIV)

⇒ **WE are NOT free to encourage OTHERS to do as they please**, with no regard for how *their* actions will effect others

✓ **We** will be held accountable by God, when we encourage **others** to sin.

Jesus said to his disciples: "**Things that cause people to stumble** are bound to come, but **woe to anyone through whom they come**."
Luke 17:1 (NIV)

Don't cause others to stumble, whether they are Jewish, Greek, or members of God's church.
1 Corinthians 10:32 (GW)

⇒ **It's easy to sin with gifts, abilities, and possessions** (whether received from God or from people). Doing what is **right** (and honoring to God) takes effort!

✓ **It may be obvious sin:** We can be wasteful, as the parable of the prodigal son illustrates (Luke 15:11-32).

"... the younger son gathered his possessions and left for a country far away from home. There **he wasted everything** he had on a wild lifestyle."
Luke 15:13b (GW)

✓ **It may look good on the surface, yet not be honoring to God.**

If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them.
If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same. ...
But love your enemies, do good to them, ...
Luke 6:32-33, 35a (BSB); see also vs. 33-36.

⇒ **Even generosity can at times be sinful.** If, by doing so, we encourage or reward sin, we will be held accountable for it.

✓ **Example: Rewarding laziness by feeding the lazy person.**

When we were with you, we gave you this rule: "**Whoever will not work should not be allowed to eat.**"

We hear that some people in your group refuse to work. ...

[They should]... stop bothering others, to **start working and earn their own food.** It is by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ that we are urging them to do this.

**JESUS
REQUIRES
THIS!**

2 Thessalonians 3:10-11a, 12b (ERV)

✓ **Example: Giving out money can be a problem, when you have no say in how it is used.** Ultimately, it's *God's* money. Do you really want it used to *sin against* God and people?

- **EXAMPLE:** There's a big difference between "I used it to buy food for my family," and "I wasted it like the prodigal son (Luke 15:13)."

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⇒ **Sometimes gifts may need to be taken away,** if they are misused or mistreated. (Doing so may be temporary or permanent.)

✓ **It's *not* a matter of: "It's mine, I can do what I want."** Even on the *human* level, there is a need for responsibility!

I'M GIVING
YOU A CAT.

GREAT! I LOVE TO
TORTURE CATS!

✓ **This issue is quite significant, when we consider Israel and the Promised Land.** (We plan to look at this issue at another time.)

I'M GIVING YOU
THE LAND OF
CANAAN.

GREAT! WE PLAN
TO HATE YOU,
AND WORSHIP
FALSE GODS!

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So what does all of this mean?

- This issue is quite significant in our study of Israel and end-time issues – but we will look at this later.
- These things also apply to us – both as individuals, and as groups.

- ✓ We can **REJOICE** in the gifts we receive – whether from God or from other people.
- ✓ We need to **REMEMBER** that:
 - All gifts that are a part of this world are *temporary*. *This should influence our priorities.*
 - We have a *responsibility* to use our gifts (whether *physical objects* or *abilities*) in a God-honoring way, aware that we will someday give account for what we did with them.

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Everything you say or do should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Col. 3:17 (GW)

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything to the glory of God.

1 Cor. 10:31 (GW)

- ✓ **All humans** have this obligation. (Even atheists who pretend that God does not exist – Romans 1:18-23.)
- ✓ **Followers of Jesus** have God's Word to teach them *how* to do this.
 - We often *fail* at doing it. But rather than giving up in discouragement, we can start again.
 - God is at work in our lives, growing us in our ability to do what is right (Romans 8:28)! We can *rejoice* in this!

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OUR MISSION

Understanding the nature of gifts and abilities, and of accountability and responsibility, will significantly impact what we do in these matters!

★ **We have much to REJOICE in... so let's do it!** ★

- ✓ We can **GIVE** and we can **RECEIVE**; and do so with **GRATEFUL** hearts.
- ✓ Aware of our **ACCOUNTABILITY** and **RESPONSIBILITY** in these matters, we can give **THANKS** to God.

By means of his Word and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, God is teaching us how to live and respond the right way in these matters.

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Credits

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