

FAR

ABOVE RUBIES



The Gift

As Christmas approaches, many of us will invest a lot of time and energy shopping for gifts for family and friends that we think they would like. We don't always get it right, but when we do, we appreciate that it was worth all the time and effort spent in finding that special gift.

Several years ago, as my husband Richard handed me my Christmas present, I could see the look of excitement in his face. His expression, however, soon turned to one of bewilderment as I asked him *"What is it?"* *"It's an iPod"*, he exclaimed, *"an MP3 player,"* as if I should know what that meant! Now you must remember that at that time there were no iPads and there was certainly no Facebook or Twitter. When Richard explained that this little electronic gadget had the capacity to play around 1,000 songs, I was ecstatic. Knowing how much I loved music, Richard knew that this would be the perfect gift for me and so it was. It has given me years of pleasure as I have listened to my favourite songs and music on holiday, when travelling and even when in hospital.

As we exchange presents this Christmas, we do so to celebrate the fact that God gave us the greatest gift of all when He sent His Son, Jesus, to be our Saviour. There are several scriptures which refer to Jesus as *"the gift of God"* and indeed, in John 4 v 10 we read that Jesus speaks of Himself as *"the gift of God."*

In Jesus' discourse with the woman at the well in Samaria (John 4), we see that this lady knew nothing about Him, except that He was a Jew. When Jesus asked her for a drink, she questioned *"How is it that you a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman from Samaria?"* As a Samaritan woman, she had already preconceived that He didn't like her, because historically the Jews had no dealings with Samaritans, as they were a mixed people of Assyrian and Jewish blood.

Sadly, like this woman, there are many people today who do not know, nor fully appreciate, who Jesus really is. They don't understand that the love of God is extended to all people regardless of colour, race or creed. Without knowing anything about the dignity of His person or His nature, there are those who mistakenly think that Jesus couldn't like or love them. The truth is that although we may not know God, He certainly knows and loves each one of us. John 3 v 16 tells us *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* It doesn't matter who you are or what you have done, if you put your trust in Jesus He will save you and forgive your sins.

As Jesus revealed to the Samaritan woman that He was *"the gift of God,"* and giver of eternal life, and prophesied to her about her personal life (John 4 v 16-18), she gladly received Him as her Saviour. Immediately this woman passed from death unto life and her sins were forgiven. We also read that as the woman shared her story with fellow Samaritans in the city, many believed because of her testimony. We must never underestimate the power that there is in our testimony and, like this woman, take every opportunity to share it.

In Romans 6 v 23 we read that *"..the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."* This tells us that salvation is a free gift from God and there is absolutely nothing we can do, or have ever done, to earn or deserve it. I am therefore somewhat shocked when I hear some believers say that God must have seen something good in them when He saved them, for nothing could be further from the truth! The apostle Paul makes it clear in Eph. 2 v 8-9, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."* Jesus paid it all when He suffered and died on Calvary's cross.

Speaking of Jesus in 2 Cor. 9 v 15, Paul writes *"Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift."* It is inexpressible because there are no words that could properly express the greatness of God's gift to mankind. When the Father gave His Son as a sacrifice for our sins, it was an act of inestimable love and a love that our finite minds will never fully comprehend. It's also so amazing that, although just a babe in Bethlehem's manger, all of the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Him bodily (Col. 2 v 9). In Him were all of the promises and blessings of God, that through Him we could know peace with God, forgiveness of sins, salvation, eternal life and life more abundant (John 10 v 10). Truly wonderful!

As you receive your gifts this Christmas, I pray you will take time to remember the greatest gift of all – His name is Jesus.