

The Great Gift Exchange

11 - Nehemiah: A Time for Restoration

Church on the Park | Christmas Sunday, 20 DEC 2020 | Glen Gerhauser

Texts: [Esther 9:19, 22](#)

[The New International Version](#) Chapter 9

19 That is why rural Jews—those living in villages—observe the fourteenth of the month of Adar as a day of joy and feasting, a day for giving presents to each other.

Theme: No gift can compare to God's gift.

Intro: In the book of Esther (about 35 years before Nehemiah), the people celebrated God's salvation by giving gifts to one another. God's people were in an extremely challenging situation: they were facing annihilation. The king sentenced all of the Jewish people to death. But Esther, a Jew herself, found herself in a place of influence—she was the queen. Mordechai (Esther's guardian) encouraged: "And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" ([Es 4:14](#), NIV). The people fasted and prayed, and Esther used her position to change the king's heart. God saved the Jews through Esther, and they celebrated with joy and feasting, as well as giving presents to one another and the poor. This upcoming year, Purim, the feast that started in Esther, falls on the 25th and 26th of February 2021. It's a fun feast, and many aspects of it remind us of Christmas. In Israel, they dress up in customs, and when they read Esther, they rattle noisemakers when they hear Haman's name (the archenemy of the Jewish people). Today, we will be giving gifts to one another, but it's all because of the greatest gift ever given.

1) G - God gives the greatest gift ([John 3:16](#)).

- Over four hundred years after Esther, another great gift came to the Jewish people, the Messiah, Jesus.
 - This was not just a great gift, but the greatest gift ever-given.
 - This gift was given to the Jews, but not only the Jews—it was given to the whole world.
 - John talks about God's gift saying,
 - [John 3:16-17](#) NASB95

- "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.
- Like the Jews of Esther's day, we are all under the sentence of death. The Bible tells us, "The wages of sin is death..." ([Rom. 6:23](#)). But here's the good news, "...the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord" ([Rom. 6:23](#)).
 - This gift of God saves us from something more than physical death; it saves us from spiritual, eternal death.
 - It saves us from hell and being lost for all eternity.
- God doesn't want anyone to perish, so he gave us the gift of himself, his Son.
 - But this gift needs to be received.
- How do you get this gift?

2) I - I receive his gift by ([John 1:9-12](#)).

- Show a gift in an ugly package and one in a nice package
 - Choose lots to see who gets to choose a gift.
 - What gift do you want?
 - Would you like to change your mind and exchange your gift?
- [John 1:9-12](#) NASB95
 - "There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name."
- What do the symbols of Christmas mean?
 - The lights represent Jesus as our light.
 - The gifts represent the greatest gift: Jesus Christ
 - The tree represents life and growth and reminds us of the greatest tree, the cross, where Jesus died to save us from our sins.
 - The decorations remind us of the joy and happiness God gives us.
 - Even the candy canes have a meaning.
 - J - stands for Jesus. It looks like a shepherd's rod. The red reminds us of the blood of Jesus and the white represents how clean God makes those who receive his blood.
- In order to know God and experience his saving power, you need to receive his gift.
 - It's no use if you leave it unwrapped, or reject it because it comes in a package you don't like.

3) F - Faith and ([John 1:9-12](#)).

- You receive God's gift by faith.
 - But what does faith mean?
- Faith means believing and trusting God's Word as truth.
- Faith means entrusting your life to God.
- Those who have faith let Jesus be their Shepherd.
- He is now your leader and guide.

4) T - Trading my brokenness for his blessing ([Romans 6:23](#)).

- Trade your brokenness for his blessing.
- Trade your life for his life.
- Trade your sin (disobedience) for his righteousness (obedience).
- Trade your death for his life.
- This is the great gift exchange.

Conclusion: God gives the greatest gift. I receive his gift by faith and trading my brokenness for his blessing.