

## Feast of Hanukkah

Feast of Hanukkah &ndash; also known as The Feast of Dedication (of the Holy Temple)

An extra-biblical Feast

Hanukkah is Hebrew for "dedication"; also called "The Feast of Lights". Unlike the seven major Feasts which God commanded the Jews to observe annually (Leviticus 23), Hanukkah is not found in the Old Testament. The reason is that the Feast of Hanukkah is the result of events which took place during "the inter-testamental period" which are the 400 years between the Old and New Testament writings.

This Feast commemorates God's deliverance of the Jewish people from the Syrian King, Antiochus, who invaded the Jewish nation in 165 A.D. and demanded that they abandon the God of Israel and imposed on them Greek customs, including idolatry. They forbid the Jewish people from practicing their religion, including circumcision and observing the Sabbath. To insure that the Jewish people could not worship, Antiochus defiled the Temple in Jerusalem. He placed idols (statue of Zeus, the Greek god, whose face resembled Antiochus' face), in the Temple and even sacrificed SOW (pig) upon the holy altar. He also took the title of "Epiphanes" which means "God manifested" and demanded to be worshiped, (claimed to be GOD), The Jewish people, because of his blasphemous claim to be deity, changed his name to "Epimanes" which means (crazy or madman).

A family known as the Maccabees waged a successful rebellion (which took three years) against Antiochus and drove the Syrians out of Israel. The Feast of Hanukkah commemorates the victory God gave the Jewish people &ndash; the high point of the victory was rededicating the Temple in Jerusalem. (The story of the Maccabees is found in the Apocrypha (non-inspired) historical books containing true historical facts) This event was prophesied in the book of Daniel in 556 B.C. Antiochus first mentioned in Daniel 8:8-9 and then discussed in greater detail in Daniel 11:21-45

Antiochus was one of Satan's agents in his plan to destroy the Jewish people; however God preserved them once again, staying true to His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to sustain his descendants forever.

Hanukkah is significant in another way. It is a reminder that the Bible prophesies that another terrible period of suffering lies ahead for the Jewish people. It will be a time of persecution like the one that produced the Feast of Hanukkah. Antiochus is a prophetic type of the Antichrist who is to come.

Like Antiochus, Antichrist will profane the Jewish Temple and declare himself to be God. 2 Thessalonians 2:4. He will then launch an unparalleled persecution of the Jewish people that will ultimately result in 2/3 of them being destroyed. Zechariah 13:8

Feast of Hanukkah today

As the Jewish people celebrate this Feast of Hanukkah, they are celebrating their deliverance from Antiochus, however, they have missed the fact that their ultimate deliverer, Jesus the Messiah, has already come. So this Feast is a bittersweet celebration since they are still looking for their persecution to cease.

Notice while Jesus was celebrating the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah) - John 10:22-23

the Jewish people (who were also celebrating this Feast which commemorated their deliverance from the Syrians) asked Jesus in John 10:24 if He was really the Messiah who would preserve the Jewish people from the Romans. They were looking for a Messiah, another Maccabee family to deliver them. In John 10:25, Jesus said "I told you, and you do not believe". Then Jesus goes on to say in John 10:27-28 "My sheep hear my voice"; He offered salvation from sin and death, not from Roman oppression.

Then in verse 30 Jesus, says "I and My Father are one". Remember, this conversation is going on during the Feast of Hanukkah. The Jewish people were remembering during this time that they had rejected the false claims of Antiochus (that he was God). Now here is Jesus, standing in the Temple, saying that He is the Messiah, (the Savior of the world).

What did the Jewish people do? They picked up stones to stone him (v. 31); they didn't believe and rejected Jesus - (they were looking for a military deliverer, not a spiritual one).

The Jewish people use a lunar-solar calendar, so the Hanukkah dates vary from year to year. This year, the first night of Hanukkah is December 24 and goes through December 31.

One legend of why Hanukkah lasts for eight days is called "the miracle of the oil". The Jewish people had only enough "oil" for one day, but they needed oil for eight days to consecrate the oil to rededicate the Temple. However, the oil continued to burn for eight whole days which was enough time to make and sanctify new oil. This was a supernatural miracle (if true) and is why Hanukkah lasts for eight

days.

Another possible reason why Hanukkah lasts for eight days is that the Maccabees, upon recapturing Jerusalem, conducted a belated Feast of Tabernacles celebration (which lasts for eight days). (The Temple was dedicated on the Feast of Tabernacles in the time of Solomon). So the eight-day festival of joy and thanksgiving would have been an especially appropriate way to commemorate the rededication of the Temple.

The Jewish people celebrate this Feast as a time of joy. They celebrate with games, singing and plenty of food. Traditionally the food is fried in oil to symbolize the miracle of the oil. Two main foods served are potato pancakes (called Latkes) and jelly filled sugar donuts called Sufganiyot.

During Hannukah, the nine candle Menorah (or lampstand) is lit each night. The nine candles symbolize the eight days that the Temple lamps burned on a one day supply of oil. The ninth candle usually stands taller or apart from the rest and is always lit first. This taller candle is called the Shamash (which means "the servant candle") and is used to light the rest of the candles. This "servant candle" represents the Messiah, Jesus.

When Jewish people light the candles, they say the traditional blessing:

"Blessed art Thou our God, King of the Universe, Who has given us life, and Who sustains us and has privileged us to reach this season.

"Blessed are Thou our God, King of the Universe, who hallows us by Thy commandments and allows us to kindle the lights of Hanukkah."

"Blessed art Thou our God, King of the Universe, Who worked miracles for our fathers of old during this season."

They also play the dredge game using "dreidels" and coins called "gelt" in Yiddish that are chocolate with gold foil covering. The four sides of the dreidel are Nun, Gimmel, Hay or Shin. These letters stand for the Hebrew words, Nes Gadol Haya Sham which means "A great miracle happened there";.

Spiritual significance of Hanukkah

A great miracle happened

over 1900 years ago when a Jewish girl named Mary was visited by an angel. She was told that, while still a virgin, that she would conceive a child by the Holy Spirit — a child dedicated to be the Holy Temple of God. “A great miracle happened there!” Jesus was dedicated at conception, by God through the angel Gabriel, to be the ultimate Temple of God.

Hanukkah, then, was from creation the time for the Temple of God to be dedicated, the Tabernacle in the wilderness, the Temple at Jerusalem, and the heavenly Temple of God (Jesus the Messiah) The oil used in the Temple menorahs is symbolic of the Spirit of God by which Jesus was conceived to be the Light of the World, a much greater miracle of light than the one that Hanukkah celebrates.

We celebrate Jesus of Nazareth, “the light that shines in the darkness” and “the true light who can enlighten all those who receive Him”. Jesus Himself proclaimed to be “the light of the world”.

What other meaning does Hanukkah have for believers? First of all, God has called us to be separate from the world — just as Maccabees family resisted the attempt of Antiochus to destroy their cultural and religious heritage, we must stand firm against the modern day pressures for us to conform to the pagan standards of the world.

Those of us who have accepted the claims of Jesus Christ, can celebrate “the miracle of Hanukkah” as well as the miracle of Christ’s birth. Because God keeps His promises, He will sustain and save Israel and because God keeps His promises, He will save and keep all those who call upon His name through faith in Immanuel, our Messiah, Jesus.

The work “Hanukkah” or “dedication” in the Old Testament:

Numbers 7:1-11

Numbers 7:84-89

2 Chronicles 7:1-12

Ezra 6:14-22

Nehemiah 12:26-30

Psalms 30:1

Daniel 3:1-6