

The Feasts of Israel - Lesson Twelve-The Feast of Hanukkah, or Dedication

They are called the "Four hundred silent years," the time between the testaments, or covenants; called "silent" because during that time God gave no new revelation to His people. From Malachi until John the Baptist, the prophetic voice in Israel was silent. There were no prophets, no visions, and no angelic visits. However, prophetic silence did not indicate God had forgotten His people. Many significant events in Israel's history occurred during those four centuries - the development of a synagogue, the rise of the Sadducees, and Pharisees, and the domination by Rome. Perhaps none were more important than the events that gave occasion to the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah.

Hanukkah (Hebrew for "dedication"), is an annual festival of the Jews which is celebrated on eight successive days that celebrates events during this silence. It begins on the 25th day of Kislev, the third month of the Jewish calendar, corresponding, approximately, to December in the Gregorian calendar. Also known as the Festival of Lights, Feast of Dedication, and Feast of the Maccabees, Hanukkah commemorates the rededication of the Temple of Jerusalem by Judas Maccabee in 165 BC after the temple had been profaned by Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria and overlord of Palestine. In 168 BC, on a date corresponding approximately to December 25 in the Gregorian calendar, the temple was dedicated to the worship of Zeus Olympus by order of Antiochus. An altar to Zeus was set up on the high altar. When Judas Maccabees recaptured Jerusalem three years later, he had the temple purged and a new altar put up in place of the desecrated one. The temple was then rededicated to God with festivities that lasted eight days (see 1 Maccabees chapters three and four). According to Talmudic Tradition, only one cruse of pure olive oil, sealed by the high priest and necessary for the rededicate ritual, could be found, but that small quantity burned miraculously for eight days. A principal feature of the present-day celebration, commemorating this miracle, is the lighting of candles, one the first night, two the second, and so on until a special eight-branched candelabrum is completely filled. The principal source for the story of Hanukkah is the Talmud. This study looks at the events in detail.

The Historical Background

The Meaning of Hanukkah

Hanukkah is the Hebrew word for "**dedication**." The holiday is so named because it celebrates the rededication of the Temple to the Lord after it was desecrated by the Gentiles. The Hanukkah story preserves the epic struggle and the heroic exploits of one of the greatest Jewish victories of all time - the independence from Greco-Syrian oppression in 165 B.C.

The Time of Hanukkah

Hanukkah is an eight-day feast which occurs near the beginning of winter. On the Hebrew calendar, it is celebrated beginning with the 25th day of Kislev, the ninth Hebrew month (corresponding roughly to December). The holiday begins only 75 days after Yom Kippur, Israel's Day of Atonement.

The Record of Hanukkah

Although Hanukkah as a holiday is not described in Scripture, it still is the most historically documented of all the Jewish holidays. The books of 1 and 2 Maccabees are the earliest historical record of Hanukkah. They are among the 14 books of the Old Testament Apocrypha, a collection of non-inspired Jewish writings between 200 BC and about 100 A.D. Although the overwhelming majority of conservative scholars - both Jewish and Christian, ancient and modern - rightfully reject 1 and 2 Maccabees as part of the Bible, they do remain a valuable historical record.

The Origin of Hanukkah

The year was 336 B.C., and the winds of change were beginning to blow. Turbulence swept through the ancient world that would forever shape the history of mankind. That year, ***Darius III*** came to the mighty Medo-Persian throne and ruled the world. But of greater significance, another king ascended to a throne in the west. His name was Alexander, son of Philip II, king of the Greek city-state, Macedonia. Though only 20 years old, Alexander was nothing short of a brilliant commander. The might and wealth of the Persian empire dwarfed his own, but his sheer military genius enabled him to move with lightning speed against the Persians. In 332 BC, only some three years later, the armies of Alexander the Great defeated Darius III at Issus. By age 30, Alexander had conquered all the then-known world from Europe to Egypt, to the borders of India. True to his teacher, Aristotle, Alexander unified his empire through the cohesive force of Greek culture and religion known as Hellenism. The golden age of the Greek empire, like a shooting star, was brief, last but a few short years. At age 33, Alexander the Great died an untimely death without an heir, and the rule of his empire was passed to his four generals. They geographically divided the vast Grecian empire into four parts with Seleucus ruling Syria and Eastern Asia Minor, Ptolemy ruling Egypt, Lysimachus ruling Thrace and Western Asia Minor (Turkey), and Cassander ruling Macedonia and Greece.

The Madman

Had it not been for her geographical location, the tiny vassal state of Israel would certainly have gone unnoticed amidst the swirling wind currents of the ancient world. But such was not the case. Israel was strategically located between Syria and Egypt, the land bridge between the continents of Asia, Africa

and Europe. Control of Israel was key to dominance in the region. With the death of Alexander, Israel again found herself at the center of the maelstrom. For nearly 200 years, she was tossed like a leaf in the wind between the persecutions of Seleucid (Syrian) and Ptolemaic (Egyptian) dynasties that sought to dominate the Middle East.

In 171 B.C., Antiochus IV came to the Seleucid throne in Syria. He was a tyrant - cruel, harsh and savage. He wore his pride like a garment. Believing that he was deity in the flesh, he referred to himself as Antiochus *Theos Epiphanes* ("*Antichous, the visible god*"). His detractors called him Epimanes, or "madman." Without warning, Israel found herself exposed to his intolerant rule - a foreshadowing of the coming Antichrist. Antiochus was anxious to unite his kingdom of many languages, cultures and religions. These diversities only served to fan the fires on individual nationalism and independence. He desired to impose or "hellenize" Greek language, thought, and religion upon his subjects in an effort to unify his rule through assimilation.

In response to this two political factions developed within Israel. The religious in Israel comprised the Orthodox party. They desired rule by the Ptolemy in Egypt since the dynasty did not seek to hellenize its subjects. For Hellenism was far more than just Greek philosophy and ordered society - of mythological gods, and promoted widespread immorality in the worship of those gods. The Orthodox party was committed to preserving Judaism and the pure worship of the God of Israel. Conversely, there were those of the "progressive" Hellenist party. They included many of the aristocracy who had little concern for the faith of their fathers. They saw only the ECONOMIC and SOCIAL advantages of appearing enlightened, civilized, and accepted by the advanced nations throughout the world which embraced Hellenism. Therefore, these Hellenists desired Syrian rule along with its imposes Greek culture. This group willingly "forsook" (the Greek word, "apostatize" or "abandon") the HOLY COVENANT. (1 Macc. 1:15)

The Victory over Antiochus

More than 2000 years ago, the land of Judea was ruled by Antiochus, a tyrannical Syrian king. Even today, people fight wars over their gods, despite claims to value "religious tolerance." But a couple of thousand years ago, religious tolerance didn't exist at all. Religion was as good an excuse as any to oppress a people. That's precisely what Antiochus did to the Jews: he forbade them to observe the Sabbath or study their religious text, the Torah, and he erected a statue of Zeus in their sacred temple of Jerusalem. Many Jews followed his decrees, because they had no choice; those who resisted were executed. In 167 B.C., the Jews -- driven to desperation -- rose up against Antiochus. Mattathias, a well-respected priest, gathered together an army and put his five sons in charge. Judah and his brothers wanted a name for their battalion that would signify force and strength; "Maccabee", meaning "hammer",

fit the bill. It took three years of fighting, but eventually the Maccabees drove the Syrians out of Israel and reclaimed the temple in Jerusalem. In time a godly faithful company of Jews resisted these laws and revolted against the desecration of the Temple. Notable among these was the priestly family of the Maccabees. A revolt took place under the Maccabees and eventually the Syrians were driven from Jerusalem. This took place about B.C. 164. Judas Maccabees and his followers came back into Jerusalem and solemnly cleansed the Temple from the profanations to which it had been subjected under Antiochus. He removed the polluted altar, and put the stones in a separate place on the Temple mount, and restored the worship of the Lord (1 Maccabees 4:52, 56, 59). ***This "cleansing of the Sanctuary" (Daniel 8:13-14) took place on the 25th day of Chisleu (December the 25th), and the joyous celebration lasted for eight days.***

On each of these days the 'Hallel' was sung, the people carried palms and branches of other trees. The Temple was illuminated as well as the private houses about Jerusalem. Tradition says that they found a jar of consecrated oil which miraculously lasted for eight days and thus the Temple was lighted again. Jews today light candles at the Feast, generally a candlestick with nine candles thereon. The Temple was the central power of unity, binding the Jews together as one. According to the prophetic word of the last prophet, Malachi, the Messiah would ***"suddenly come to His Temple"*** (Mal. 3:1)

Naturally, the Maccabees quickly got rid of the statue of Zeus. Then they cleansed and purified the temple, and rekindled the menorah, a candelabra that symbolized God's Divine Presence. Oddly enough, although it only held enough oil to burn for a single day, the menorah burned for eight. This was the miracle.

About the Menorah

To Jews and non-Jews alike, the menorah, or Hanukkiyah, is the most recognizable symbol of Hanukkah. It's usually a nine-branch candelabrum whose candles are lit by a "***shammash***" or service candle which then takes its own place at the center of the menorah. The menorah itself is placed in a window or anywhere it can be seen by passers-by.

Lighting the Menorah

On the first night of Hanukkah, a single candle (or oil wick) is lit on the far right side of the menorah. A candle is added, from right to left, each night, and the newest candle is always lit first. Ideally, the candles should be lit as soon as stars become visible in the night sky, but they can be lit late into the night. While the candles are being lit and the blessing given, the whole family and any guests gather to witness the ceremony; everyone is encouraged to participate. By the eighth night, with all eight candles lit, the menorah makes a spectacular sight.

And as they did the previous evenings, the candles will continue to shine until they burn themselves out.

The Blessing

The first blessing thanks God for the commandment to "kindle the Hanukkah lights." *Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha-olam Asher Kidshanu B'mitzvotav V'tzivanu L'hadlik Ner Shel Hanukkah.* Blessed is Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, by whose Mitzvot we are hallowed, who commands us to kindle the Hanukkah lights.

The second blessing praises God for the miracle the candles symbolize; it's said as the candles are being lit: *Baruch Atah Adonia Eloheinu Melech Ha-olam She-asa Nissim L'votenu Bayamim Ha-hem Ba-ZmanHa-zeh.* Blessed is Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who performed wondrous deeds for our ancestors in days of old, at this season.

On the first night of Hanukkah the "shehechyanu" blessing is included, to signify that this is the first time the Hanukkah lights have been lit this season. *Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha-olam She-he-che-yanu V'ki-ye-manu V'hi-ge Yanula-zman Ha-zeh.* Blessed is Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, for giving us life, for sustaining us and for enabling us to reach this season.

The Modern Observance

Hanukkah is not a very important religious holiday. The holiday's religious significance is far less than that of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Passover, and Shavu'ot. It is roughly equivalent to Purim in significance, and you won't find many non-Jews who have even heard of Purim! Hanukkah is not mentioned in Jewish scripture; the story is related in the book of Maccabees, which Jews do not accept as scripture.

A Time of Lights

The principal ceremony of Hanukkah is the lighting of candles each evening in the home and synagogue. Their light may not be used for any practical purposes, only for the celebration of holiday. The Hanukkah menorah (candelabra), called a *hanukkiyah*, holds eight candles (one for each night of Hanukkah). An additional place (usually in the center and lifted higher than the others) is reserved for a ninth candle, called the *shammash*, or "servant" candle. It is used to light the other candles. Each night, additional light is lit, using the servant candle, until all eight are lit on the eighth night of Hanukkah. By tradition, they are lit from left to right, and a special blessing is said before and after the lights are kindled thanking God for his deliverance. The Hanukkah menorah is

placed in the front window of the house so that all who pass by may see the lights and be reminded of the meaning of Hanukkah.

On the eve of Hanukkah, marathon runners are sent to the village of Modin, the initial site of the ancient Maccabean revolt. Flaming freedom torches are lit from the Hanukkah menorah there and are carried by the runners to Jerusalem where a procession is held at the Western Wall of the Temple to kindle the great menorah. This ceremony is not only a reminder of freedom but represents the spirit of martyrdom which made it possible.

The only religious observance related to the holiday is the lighting of candles. The candles are arranged in a candelabrum called a menorah (or sometimes called a Chanukah) that holds nine candles: one for each night, plus a shamus (servant) at a different height. On the first night, one candle is placed at the far right. The shamus candle is lit and three berakhot (blessings) are recited: l'hadlik neir (a general prayer over candles), she-asah nisim (a prayer thanking G-d for performing miracles for our ancestors at this time), and she-hekhanu (a general prayer thanking G-d for allowing us to reach this time of year). See Chanukah Candle Lighting Blessings for the full text of these blessings. After reciting the blessings, the first candle is then lit using the shamus candle, and the shamus candle is placed in its holder. The candles are allowed to burn out on their own after a minimum of 1/2 hour. Each night, another candle is added from right to left (like the Hebrew language). Candles are lit from left to right (because you pay honor to the newer thing first). On the eighth night, all nine candles (the 8 Chanukah candles and the shamus) are lit.

Why the shamus candle? The Chanukah candles are for pleasure only; we are not allowed to use them for any productive purpose. We keep an extra one around (the shamus), so that if we need to do something useful with a candle, we don't accidentally use the Chanukah candles. The shamus candle is at a different height so that it is easily identified as the shamus.

A Time of Gifts

Hanukkah is also a time of gifts. Especially in America, Hanukkah has been tremendously affected by Christmas because of its proximity. To counteract the strong influence, the exchange of gifts has become a regular part of 20th Century Hanukkah observance. Earlier tradition, preserved from Eastern Europe, involves the custom of Hanukkah *gelt* (Yiddish for MONEY). On the fifth night of Hanukkah, parents and grandparents gather the children and give them coins. Hanukkah is also a special time of the year and *tzedekah* (charity). Because the blind cannot enjoy lighting the Hanukkah lights, the major ceremony of the holiday, special contributions are often given to charities for the blind.

Gift-giving is not a traditional part of the modern holiday, but has been added in places where Jews have a lot of contact with Christians, as a way of

dealing with our children's jealousy of their Christian friends. It is extremely unusual for Jews to give Chanukkah gifts to anyone other than their own young children. The only traditional gift of the holiday is "gelt," small amounts of money.

A Time of Games

Hanukkah is a time for games. Adults often enjoy playing cards. The practice of playing games of chance was protested by various rabbis through the centuries, but the tradition remains today. The most popular children's game for Hanukkah is the *dreidel* (Yiddish) or *sivivon* (Hebrew). It is a four-sided top with one Hebrew letter on each of its sides. The letters are the first letters of the words in the phrase *Nes Gadol Hayah Sham* which means, "A great miracle happened there." In Israel, the last word is changed to "here" since it was in Israel that the events of Hanukkah occurred. Each player puts a coin, nut, or foil-covered chocolate coin in the "pot" and takes turns spinning the top. If the Hebrew letter NUN lands up, nothing happens. If GIMEL, the player wins the whole pot. If HAY, the player wins half the pot. If SHIN, the player loses one point to the pot.

A Time of Foods

Hanukkah is a time of food. Hanukkah parties are often arranged with friends and family to celebrate the lighting of the candles. It is traditional to eat fried foods on Chanukkah because of the significance of oil to the holiday. Among Ashkenazic Jews, this usually includes latkes.

A Time of Singing

Hanukkah is a time of singing. A popular Ashkenazic tradition is in the singing of *Maoz Tzur*, or "Mighty Rock," which praises God as Israel's deliverer. It was written in the 13th century by an unknown German poet and takes its name from Isaiah 26:4. A popular Sephardic tradition is the reciting of Psalms 30 after the lighting of the candles.

Isaiah 26:4 - Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength:

The Biblical Connection To Hanukkah

Although the fanciful legend of the oil cruse exists today, it provides no credible answers why Hanukkah is celebrated for eight days and why it is celebrated with lights. However, the Bible provides us the answers:

Why Eight Days?

Jewish tradition teaches that Hanukkah is celebrated for eight days because it took eight days to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem after the revolt. However, a much more solid-basis for that rests in Scripture.

In Scripture, an eight-day period was always the pattern of dedication. That is, the object to be dedicated was set aside (sanctified) for seven days, and then on the eighth day it was holy to the Lord. Such was the case with firstborn animals consecrated to God (Ex.22:30; Lev. 22:27). Hebrew males were also circumcised on the EIGHTH day (Lev. 12:3). The original altar in the Temple was sanctified for seven days, and on the eighth day it was blessed. (Ex. 29:37) The dedication of the rebuilt Temple after Babylonian captivity took place during PASSOVER (Ezra 6:16-22), which in conjunction with the Feast of Unleavened Bread lasted for eight days. Further, the altar of the Millennial Temple will be on consecrated on the eighth day (Ezek. 43:26-27)

A closer pattern for Hanukkah is found in the story of King Hezekiah who, after he came to the throne, rededicated the temple and altar to the Lord after eight days (2 Chr. 29:16-17). This was done in response to wicked King Ahaz sacrificing pagan deities on the altar to the Assyrian gods (2 Kings 16:10-18; 2 Chr. 28:21-25).

Yet a third reason for Hanukkah being celebrated for eight days - it was DIRECTLY patterned after the FEAST OF TABERNACLES. The Feast of Tabernacles was a seven-day feast followed by a sabbath of rest. Jewish history says this:

"And they kept eight days with gladness, as in the feast of the tabernacles, remembering that not long afore they held the feast of tabernacles, when they wandered in the mountains and dens like beasts. Therefore, they bare branches, and fair boughs, and palms also, and sang psalms unto him that had given them good success in cleansing his place" (2 Macc. 10:6-7)

So, originally, Hanukkah was almost a second observance of Tabernacles, in much the same way that Hezekiah instituted a second observance of Passover when the people were not able to keep the first one. (2 Chr. 30; cf. Num. 9:10-11). This explains why the Hallel (Psalms 113-118), which was originally sung only at Tabernacles, is still sung in the synagogue Hanukkah service today. The Maccabees "sang psalms" (2 Macc. 10:7) as in Tabernacles.

Why Lights

The fact that Hanukkah is patterned after Tabernacles also provides the meaning for the emphasis on lights. When Solomon dedicated the first Temple of the Lord, he did so at the Feast of Tabernacles (2 Chr. 5:3). That dedication was accompanied by the coming of the Shekinah glory to the Temple and the divine lighting of the fire upon the sacrificial altar (2 Chr. 7:1). As a result, the Feast of

Tabernacles later developed an impressive light celebration each night in the Temple. Since Hanukkah celebrated the relighting of the fire on the purified altar and was patterned after the Feast of Tabernacles, the emphasis upon light was borrowed quite naturally as viewed.

Hanukkah and Scripture

Hanukkah as a holiday was not instituted until after the Old Testament was complete. But even though Hanukkah is not mentioned by name, the events of Hanukkah were prophesied centuries beforehand by the Hebrew prophet, Daniel.

Daniel saw an awesome vision (Daniel 8:1-12). He saw a ram with two horns (The Medo-Persian empire) pushing so that no beasts could stand before it. Then a goat (Greece) appeared in the west and moved so quickly that its feet did not touch the ground. A very noticeable horn (Alexander the Great) was between its eyes. The goat (Greece) crashed into the ram (Medo-Persia) with incredible fury and broke the two horns from its head, all but killing it. No sooner had the goat (Greece) become great, when its large horn was broken, allowing four smaller horns (Alexander's generals) to replace it. Then, amazingly, a little horn (Antichous) came up from one of the four and became exceedingly powerful. It cast down some of the stars (righteous Jews) and stamped on them. It magnified itself to the Prince of the starry host, took away the sacrifices, and cast down His sanctuary (the Temple in Jerusalem).

Several chapters later, Daniel again prophesied of this coming Syrian persecution and the courage of God's people: "But the people who know their God shall stand strong, and carry out great exploits. And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet for many days they shall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering." (Daniel 11:32-33)

Jesus and Hanukkah

It is only natural that, during Hanukkah (the celebration of freedom from foreign oppression), thoughts of national deliverance would again be aroused. In the day of Jesus, Israel was looking for the ultimate deliverer, the Messiah himself, who would overthrow Roman rule. If He were to deliver the Jewish nation, they would never fall under Gentile dominion again. He would usher in the golden messianic age, making it possible for the Shekinah glory to return to the Temple as in the days of Solomon's dedication to the Temple.

With this thought, a group of Jewish inquirers came to Jesus. It was HANUKKAH, and Jesus was walking along Solomon's colonial walk (the pillared walkway in the Temple) He was celebrating Hanukkah in the same Temple that had been cleansed and rededicated only a few generations before. The inquirers asked, "If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus had already verified to them He was the Messiah but through their unbelief they had failed to receive Him as

such. He did not meet their messianic expectations. They were looking for a military messiah, one who was only a great human leader. Therefore, Jesus tried to broaden their narrow understanding on the deity of the Messiah by His assertion, "I AND MY FATHER ARE ONE." (John 10:30). But this drove them into such a rage they sought to stone Him. He had earlier claimed to be the "Good Shepherd," and by doing so identified Himself with the Shepherd of Israel as foretold in the Psalms and Ezekiel. (Psalms 80:1; Isaiah 40:11; Ezek. 34:12-23) Another albeit less direct claim to deity. But there could be no new occasion of Hanukkah (the overthrow of Gentile rule), for the nation was still blind in their rejection.

Hanukkah and Faithful Martyrs

The writer of Hebrews, in citing examples of great faith, mentioned godly believers who stood against Antiochus Epiphanies. He recorded:

Hebrews 11:35 - Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

The Hanukkah story reveals the names of some of those nameless martyrs listed in the book of Hebrews. In their fervent zeal, Eleazar, Hannah, and her sons were stellar examples of faithfulness to God as they steadfastly sought to "obtain a better resurrection."

The Name of Matthew

Matthew, the Levite, and follower of Jesus (Matthew 9:9; Luke 5:27), was undoubtedly named after Mattathias, the Levite hero of Israel who lived a 150 years before his birth. The name Matthew (English) is taken from Mattathias (Greek) which is taken from Matityahu (Hebrew).

Hanukkah and Christmas

THERE IS NO BIBLICAL BASIS OR FACT FOR DECEMBER 25th being the birth of the Messiah. In fact, for 300 years, the early Church viewed the celebration of Christmas as a heathen custom. Yet, the dates of Hanukkah and Christmas ARE connected. Zeus was seen as the incarnation of the son. Together with his goddess-mother, Rhea (the Queen of heaven), they formed the Greek version of the mother-child cult founded in Babylon. Antiochus chose the 25th of the month to desecrate the Temple with his pagan sacrifices because it was the birthday of Zeus. It was the winter solstice, when days began to lengthen. Sun-worshipping pagans, therefore, celebrated December 25th as the birthday of the new sun.

To the sun-worshipping Romans, Zeus was known as Jupiter. He was the son of Saturn and Ops. He was the supreme Roman deity and the father of the other pagan gods. December 17-24 was called *Saturnalia* (in honor of Saturn) and celebrated with unrestrained license. The Romans celebrated December 25th (the birthday of Zeus/Jupiter) as *Dies Natalis Invicti Solis*, "The Day of the Nativity of the Unconquered Sun."

In the fourth century AD, the Roman Church chose December 25 as the day to celebrate "Christ's Mass," a special mass in honor of Christ's birth. It was part of a concerted effort to "christianize" pagan Roman rites so that all peoples of the empire could be brought into the Roman Church.

For centuries, many segments of Christianity condemned the observance of December 25th as Sun worship. "Christian preachers of the West and the Nearer East protested against the unseemly frivolity with which Christ's birthday was celebrated, while Christians of Mesopotamia accused their Western brethren of idolatry and sun-worship for adopting as Christian this pagan festival. Yet the festival rapidly gained acceptance and became, at last, so firmly established that even the Protestant revolution of the 16th Century was not able to dislodge it."

Hanukkah and Future Events

Throughout the ages, Gentile nations have been obsessed with desecrating Temple Mount, the footstool of our God. It was there that Antichrist erected the image to Zeus. It was there that the Roman emperor Andrian who constructed a temple to Jupiter. Today, the Temple Mount is desecrated with shrines to Allah, the god of the crescent moon. This pattern is to continue, as another Hanukkah is yet future. Scripture tells us that the events of Hanukkah are merely a shadow of events at the end of this age. Daniel prophesied that "many" within Israel will again sign a covenant or security agreement with a Gentile ruler. A wicked ruler is known as Armilus by Jewish theologians and Antichrist by Christians. The confirmation of the covenant will start the clock ticking for the seven-year period as the 70th Week of Daniel. This covenant, called a covenant with "death" and "Sheol" (Isa. 28:15), will be the outward sign of the apostasy of the nation. In their blindness they will turn to a Gentile leader for peace instead of to the one true God.

At midpoint, three and one-half years later, Jerusalem will be captured and oppressed by the Gentiles (Luke 21:20; Rev. 11:2). Then Antichrist will be revealed for who he is; he will declare himself to be god and demand the worship of the world (2 Th. 2:4; Rev. 13:12-15). Like Antiochus Epiphanes, he will desecrate the rebuilt Temple with his idolatrous image, rendering it utterly desolate. Messiah Jesus foretold this in Matthew:

Matthew 24:15-16 - When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place,

***(whoever reads this, let him understand:) [16] Then let them which be in
Judaea flee into the mountains:***

The line will be drawn again - either assimilate or be annihilated. Many will fall away (apostatize) and bow down (2 Th. 2:3), but the faithful within Israel will flee to the mountains and the wilderness. Many of the faithful will lose their lives (Matthew 24:22) as the Antichrist vents his wrath on the people of God (Rev. 12:13-17). That time of great tribulation (Matthew 24:21) will be like nothing the nation has ever experienced (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1).

But God, who is faithful, will again remember His people Israel. He will send the Messiah to deliver the remnant of Israel and raise up a new Temple. (Zech. 6:12) to which the Shekinah glory will return (Isa. 4:5; Ezek. 43:1-6). And in that day, "The remnant of Israel, And such as have escaped the house of Jacob, Will never again depend on him who defeated them (Antichrist), But will depend on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth" (Isaiah 10:20)

Conclusion

Hanukkah stands as a heroic reminder of courageous and enduring faith in God. But Hanukkah is also a reminder of the faithfulness of God. Satan, though Antichous Epiphanes, had planned to destroy God's Word and His people through assimilation and annihilation. Had he been successful, there would have been no more Jewish people, no Messiah to come, and most tragically of all, no Calvary. Men and women would be forever lost in sin, without hope. And so a great miracle did happen there. It is not a cruse of oil but God's faithfulness to His people and His messianic promise that continue to give true significance to Hanukkah today.

List Of Dates

Chanukkah will begin on the following days on the American calendar:

- December 22, 2000 (Jewish Year 5761)
- December 10, 2001 (Jewish Year 5762)
- November 30, 2002 (Jewish Year 5763)
- December 20, 2003 (Jewish Year 5764)