

# Christmas Lights, Hanukkah Lights and Jesus

John 8:12 (NIV): "When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'"

The birth of Jesus Christ is celebrated by Christians around the world on December 25. Modern believers often decorate their homes, churches and other locations with lights to commemorate the Lord's birth. We call this nativity celebration Christmas. The Bible does not give an exact date for His birth but most Bible scholars believe he was actually born sometime other than December 25.

Religious Jews observe Hanukkah for eight days, beginning on the 25<sup>th</sup> of their month Kislev or Chisleu. In ancient times, it was also known as the Feast of Dedication. (See John 10:22.) Modern Jews observe the holiday by lighting eight candles, one day at a time. It's interesting that the observance of these two ancient holidays often overlap the same general period of time and both feature decorations of light.

John records the amazing words of Jesus, "I am the light of the world." He does not say that Jesus is "a light" of the world; he says Jesus declared, "I am the light of the world." In wording it this way, Jesus distinguishes Himself as the exclusive, spiritual light for humanity, while identifying as the God who revealed Himself to Moses as "I am." Jesus elevates Himself above Moses, Israel, the priesthood, the menorah, the temple and even the written Word of God. He says all these things are subordinate to His light and John unashamedly agrees.

The first-century hearers of this powerful declaration were left with only two possible conclusions: Either Jesus was

Israel's Messiah and God Himself or He was not. If Jesus is God, they would be forced to believe everything He taught and live their lives accordingly. If Jesus was not the Messiah and God Himself, they could reject Him without consequence.

Our choices today are much the same as theirs were in their day. Either Jesus is the exclusive spiritual light of the world and God Himself or Jesus is not the light of the world and is not God. Every generation of men has had these same two choices since Jesus laid down His bold declaration "I am the light of the world."

Some Messianic Jews celebrate Hanukkah and some Christians celebrate Christmas but our faith is not about Christmas lights or Hanukkah lights. The faith we practice is about Jesus. He alone is the light of the world. As believers, we all worship Jesus and He truly is the light of the world.

While the earth still exists, everyone must decide for themselves that Jesus is the light of the world. Make this special season all about Jesus. Everyone must choose to believe in the light of Jesus, receive the light of Jesus and share the light of Jesus or they choose darkness! {eoa}

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