

The Prophetic Connection Between Hanukkah and Christmas

Hanukkah is the last feast in the Jewish calendar and tells a remarkable story of the deliverance of Israel from the control of the ancient Greeks in 164 B.C. The Seleucid Dynasty had assumed rule of the area through a political and military struggle after Alexander the Great died.

They sought to assimilate the people into their Hellenistic culture (ancient Greek culture or ideals) and way of life with no exceptions, dealing ruthlessly with anyone who would oppose them. Had they been completely successful, they could have threatened the very environment that brought Messiah into the world.

Not only did they ransack the holy temple of God, desecrating all of its contents, but they actually sacrificed a pig to their Greek god Zeus on the temple altar, which naturally repulsed all of the Jews, owing to their strict dietary laws, where the pig was considered most unclean.

The Jews were outraged, and a priest named Mattathias and his five sons took up against several of their soldiers and killed them, which sparked a revolt. Being completely outnumbered, they utilized guerilla-style warfare tactics, first in the hill country and then throughout the land, which took some time. They met with surprising success, and their faith in the God of Israel inspired the nation to take back their own country, despite the odds that were against them.

In the month of Kislev (December), they reached Jerusalem and took back the temple. In restoring the menorah, which symbolized the light of God, they only had enough oil to last for one day, as it took eight days to prepare new oil.

However, the oil miraculously lasted for eight days. This event demonstrated two miracles of God: the first to deliver His people and the second to lighten His temple.

The temple was restored and rededicated to God, and a new holiday was established called Hanukkah (Hebrew for “dedication”) to remind Israel of these miracles, the Festival of Lights. Hanukkah was not one of the original Jewish feasts mentioned in Leviticus 23, as it had not happened yet. However, in light of its significance, its prophetic picture through Daniel, as well as God’s intervention, it became part of the Jewish calendar and has been celebrated ever since by Jews and some Christians all over the world.

Yeshua/Jesus Is Our Hanukkah

Isn’t it fascinating that the very last miracle recorded in the Jewish calendar is a miracle of light to foreshadow and tell us of the great light who was to come into the world? In fact, Yeshua/Jesus celebrated Hanukkah and forever connected its significance by reflecting His own Messiahship through this celebration (John 10:22-39). Isn’t it interesting that in all the feasts, we can see the character of God’s love and light for mankind? What a connection for us as believers and especially towards our Jewish friends and neighbors in our witness and love towards them. Nowhere is it clearer than through the Hanukkah celebration that we see the light of the world. Scripture tells us that God knows the beginning from the end, so don’t you think He knew that the nations would also celebrate His birth and coming during this same season? So the festival of Hanukkah, like many of the other feasts, is actually a prophetic foreshadow of Yeshua/Jesus Himself and the Christmas season that celebrates His birth. As a result, the two holidays work beautifully in tandem to lift up God’s Son upon the earth and are intricately linked, from the old to the new. And Christians everywhere, like the Jews, can enjoy this wonderful holiday.

Let's investigate this a little further and take a careful look at the three chapters in John's Gospel that surround the Hanukkah Feast. In John 9, Yeshua/Jesus gives sight to a blind man that should in itself be enough testimony for the Jewish leadership to acknowledge His sovereignty. But before 10, Yeshua/Jesus went into the temple area giving perhaps one of the only teachings where He actually refers to Himself as the Messiah, "My Father and I are one" (John 10:30). Here He asks the Pharisees to review His credentials by acknowledging the miracles He had performed to provide authenticity as to who He said and claimed to be in the flesh. Then in the very next chapter (11), Yeshua performs perhaps His greatest of all miracles by raising Lazarus from the dead, which also acts a prophetic picture of what He was about to do with His own life through His resurrection. Yeshua said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

There is no greater miracle in this world than the gift of God's one and only Son, and so a beautiful connection also exists between Hanukkah and Christmas, as Hanukkah truly foretells of the great light that was to come into the world, and Christmas celebrates that light. For both Jew and Gentile alike, as believers in Yeshua/Jesus, we have liberty to celebrate these holidays that remind us of God's faithfulness and deliverance to His people: for Jewish believers to enjoy fellowship with their Gentile family during the Christmas season and for Gentile believers to have fellowship with their Jewish family lighting the Hanukkah candles. What matters most is that Yeshua/Jesus would be lifted up that He would draw all men and women to Himself, Amen.

How to Observe Hanukkah

Hanukkah is observed using a menorah, which is a candlestick that holds nine candles. One for each day of the miracle and the ninth, called the *Shamash*, which actually means *attendant* or *servant* and of course, who is the great servant, but

Yeshua/Jesus Himself, who give light to all of us. On each of the days, the Shamash candle is lit and used to light the other candles, increasing one each day until the last day, when they are all lit. Gifts are given on each night, and chocolate money is given to the children, known as Hanukkah gelt. Special foods are eaten, usually those cooked in oil to commemorate the miracle, such as latkes (potato pancakes) and doughnuts, and a traditional game is played with a dreidel, a four-sided spinning toy.

May His great light and His servant's heart lighten us and cause us to show His presence and His glory to the world, that these generations would know the truth about God and that it would set them free to follow Him.

Happy Hanukkah and Merry Christmas, everyone! {eoa}

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