

The New Testament Hanukkah

Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication, or the Festival of Lights (Josephus called it “The Lights”), is not mentioned in the Old Testament as the event that inspired it occurred between the Testaments. It is very briefly mentioned in the Mishnah and the Talmud. It does, however, have an important place in the Gospels, as we shall see.

Antiochus, a foreshadow of the Beast to come, hated the Jews, slaughtered thousands, forbade the Torah and circumcision, and defiled the Temple of God by setting up a statue of Jupiter in the Temple with his own face on it and offered swine’s blood. He was called Antiochus Epiphanes because he believed himself a god and a son of god. This was a type of what the end-time Beast will do, sitting in the third Temple, declaring himself God. “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition. Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (2 The. 2:3-4). This causes the “Abomination of Desolation” of which Yeshua spoke. “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)” (Mat. 24:15).

Eventually, the warrior Maccabees succeeded in retaking the Temple and allowed it to be cleansed and rededicated. This rededication is where the Feast gets its name. It is always an eight-day process to dedicate the Temple. “And it came to pass on the eighth day, that Moses called Aaron and his sons, and the elders of Israel...And there came a fire out from before Yehovah, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces” (Lev. 9:1 and 24). “Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of Yehovah filled the house.... And in the eighth day they made a solemn assembly: for they kept the dedication of the altar seven days, and the feast seven days” (2 Chr. 7:1 and 9). This is why the Feast is eight days, not because of the story of the Temple Menorah burning for eight days with one day of oil, which was a later invention.

Yeshua strategically waited until the Feast of Dedication, (which represents the cleansing and rededication of the Temple, which the false son of god defiled) to go to the Temple himself and publicly declare for the first time that he truly was the Son of God. “And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon’s porch. Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me” (Joh. 10:22-25). There could have been no more dramatic and bold time and place to reveal himself.

As Christians, we can celebrate when Yeshua, the Light of the World, revealed himself to the world. “Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (Joh. 8:12). And we can take this time to rededicate ourselves to God, remembering that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Cor. 3:15-17) We are also to be lights to the world. “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that

are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Mat. 5: 14-16).

Hanukkah is traditionally celebrated with lights and the exchanging of gifts. Since it is not a commanded festival, we should not use the traditional blessing which says that God commanded it, which is not true, nor should we tell fables about the menorah.

“Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am Yehovah your God” (Num. 10:10). The Festival of Hanukkah is considered part of the Days of Joy (Hebrew *Yom Simchah*). Let us have a joyful festival.