



December 20, 2015

John 10:22-23

*"The Real Meaning of Hanukkah"*

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In today's teaching, Pastor Gary shares the historical, biblical, and practical application of Hanukkah. Hanukkah is a Jewish celebration of an event that happened in Jerusalem 165 years before Christ, when a group of Jews rebelled against their Greek oppressors. The miracle that occurred is still commemorated today in the 8-day celebration of Hanukkah. How does Hanukkah relate to Christ or Christmas? What is the real meaning of Hanukkah? Pastor Gary will answer these important questions in today's study.

### Historical

1. Hanukkah is an 8-day celebration that usually takes place about the same time as Christmas.
  - a. The 2015 dates were December 6<sup>th</sup> through December 14<sup>th</sup>.
2. The story of Hanukkah starts in approximately 168BC.
3. The Greek Empire dominated the world at this time.
4. Alexander the Great had conquered the Persian Empire.
5. When Alexander the Great died in 323BC, he had no legal heirs, so his kingdom was divided among four of his generals.
6. Seleucus, one of the four generals, oversaw the largest part of the Empire, and his territory included everything from the eastern border of the Mediterranean Sea all the way to the border of India, and was known as the Seleucid Dynasty.
  - a. This vast territory included Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

7. Antiochus IV was a king in the latter part of the Seleucid Dynasty, and he reigned over this region.
  - a. His father was Antiochus III the Great.
  - b. Antiochus IV reigned from 175BC to 164BC.
  - c. He gave himself the surname Epiphanes, which, in Greek, means, God manifest or the visible God.
  - d. He declared that he was identical to Zeus, the principle god of the Greeks!
  - e. Archaeologists have found coins that he had minted, which show his head on the body of Zeus.
8. Behind his back, the people under his rule called him “Antiochus IV Epimanes,” which, in Greek, means, madman!
9. His primary objective was to Hellenize the world, which meant he wanted to bring Greek thinking and culture to everyone under his rule.
10. In 168BC, he came to Jerusalem under the guise of peace, but when the people resisted his efforts to Hellenize Israel, he quickly changed tactics.
11. Antiochus IV slaughtered a great number of men, and he sold the women and children into slavery.
12. He issued a proclamation that abolished Judaism, including the Sabbath, circumcision, the Feasts, and declared that they must follow the pagan gods of the Greeks!
13. Antiochus IV issued an order for all of the ancient Hebrew scrolls to be gathered up and be destroyed.
14. He desecrated the Temple by sacrificing a pig on the altar!
15. It’s interesting to note that 300 years earlier, Daniel prophesied that this event would take place.
16. Daniel, who prophesied during the reign of the Persians, stated that the Persians would be defeated by a might king, who came in the person of Alexander the Great.
17. Daniel’s prophesy spoke of the kingdom being divided into four kingdoms.
  - a. **Daniel 8:22** - *“The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power.”*

18. Daniel also prophesied about the king who would rule the region.
- a. **Daniel 11:31** - *“His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation.”*
19. Jesus also quoted the prophesy of Daniel, however, he was speaking of a future time.
- a. **Matthew 24:15-22** - *“ ‘So when you see standing in the holy place “the abomination that causes desolation,” spoken of through the prophet Daniel - let the reader understand - then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now - and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. At that time if anyone says to you, “Look, here is the Christ!” or, “There he is!” do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect - if that were possible.’ ”*
20. Antiochus IV fulfilled the prophesy of Daniel, and the antichrist will be the fulfillment of Jesus’ remarks about a future time.
- a. **2 Thessalonians 2:4** - *“He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.”*
21. The Jewish people revolted against Antiochus IV about 165BC, and Judah Maccabee was their leader.
- a. He was the son of the High Priest.
  - b. This is referred to as the Maccabean Revolt.
  - c. They took back the Temple and their land, which was definitely a victory that came from the Lord!
22. One of the first things they did was to sanctify and cleanse the Temple, and relight the menorah.
- a. A menorah is a seven-branched candelabrum, which was the only source of light in the Temple.
  - b. Sacred olive oil, which was the fuel, was poured into each hollow branch, and a wick was also placed into each branch.

- c. They only found one sacred vial of olive oil, and the oil would have only lasted one day.
  - d. The miracle is that it took eight days to make the sacred olive oil, and though they only had enough for one day, it miraculously stayed lit eight days until the sacred olive oil was made.
23. Hanukkah means dedication.
24. The Hanukkah menorah doesn't have seven branches; it has nine braches.
- a. Eight branches are representative of the miracle of the eight days of oil.
  - b. The ninth branch is called the Shamash, which means, the servant light or servant candle.
  - c. The ninth candle was used to light the other candles.

#### Biblical

25. The only reference to Hanukkah in the Bible is found in the book of John.
26. [John 10:22-23](#) - *"Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade."*
- a. The Feast took place in the month of Kislev, which is basically our December.
27. Every man over 21 years of age was required to go to Jerusalem to celebrate three Feasts per year: Passover, Pentecost, and Booths.
28. The only time Jesus was in Jerusalem was to celebrate one of the Feasts.
29. Pastor Gary said that the fact that we read that Jesus was in Jerusalem in wintertime is evidence that Jesus celebrated Hanukkah.

#### Practical

30. It is also called the Feast of Lights, because light was the miracle.
31. Today, when Jews celebrate Hanukkah, they light a candle each night, and when they light the first candle, they recite this blessing: "Blessed are You, O Lord Our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with Your commandments and commanded us to kindle the lights of Hanukkah."

32. Pastor Gary said, "I think it is no coincidence that the one [Jesus] who steps into our dark world declares in [John 8:12](#): *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*
33. In Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Jesus is referred to as the light, fifty times, including 25 times in the book of John!
34. [John 1:4-9](#) - *"In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John [the Baptist]. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light [Jesus] that gives light to every man was coming into the world."*
35. Pastor Gary said, "Hanukkah and Christmas share one major theme in common; they are both a celebration of light. I submit to you that the birth of Christ is a celebration of the greater Light who came into the world to save us from our sin. The love of God who condescended to our level to become like us and take on skin and die for our sins is the Light who came into the world."
36. [John 3:16-21](#) - *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light..."*
37. [John 12:46](#) - *"I [Jesus] have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness."*
38. [Isaiah 9:2, 6-9](#) - *"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned... For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this."*