

Chanukkah- Feast of Dedication

- also known as Festival of Lights.

Chanukkah is an eight day holiday which begins on the 25th day of the month of Kislev. It marks the miraculous victory of the Jews, led by the Maccabees, against Greek persecution and religious oppression. In addition to being victorious in war, another miracle occurred: **When the Maccabees came to rededicate the Temple, they found only one flask of oil with which to light the Menorah. This small flask lasted for eight days.** In order to commemorate this miracle, we light a Menorah for the eight days of Chanukah.

This year (5768 / 2007-2008) Chanukkah begins at nightfall of December 4, 2007, and ends on December 12, 2007. On the evening before each one of the days, the corresponding number of Chanukah candles are lit.

Paul said in Colossians 2:16-17 that the Jewish feasts and celebrations were actually a shadow of the things to come through Yahushua (Jesus Christ) As we discover the significance of each, we will certainly gain a greater knowledge of God's Word, an improved understanding of the Bible and a deeper relationship with the Lord.

Feast of Dedication - Chanukkah - Festival of Lights:

The Feast of Dedication or Hanukkah is also known as the Festival of Lights, or the Feast of Dedication.

We will look at the Feast of Dedication from a Christian perspective, explaining its biblical basis, traditional observances, seasons, facts, and an interesting section revealing the fulfillment of the Messiah, Yahushua (Jesus Christ) through the feast.

Time of Observance:

Chanukkah is celebrated during the Hebrew month of Kislev (November or December). It begins on day 25 of Kislev and lasts for 8 days.

Scripture Reference:

The story of Chanukkah is recorded in the First Book of Maccabees, which is part of the Apocrypha. The Feast of Dedication is mentioned in the New Testament Book of John, chapter 10, verse 22.

About the Feast of Dedication:

Prior to the year 165 BC, the Jewish people who dwelled in Judea were living under the rule of the Greek kings of Damascus. During this time Seleucid King Antiochus Epiphanes, the Greco-Syrian king, took control of the Temple in Jerusalem and forced the Jewish people to abandon their worship of God, their holy customs and reading of the Torah, and he made them bow down to the Greek gods. According to the records, this King Antiochus IV defiled the temple by sacrificing a pig on the altar and spilling its blood on the holy scrolls of Scripture.

As a result of the severe persecution and pagan oppression, a group of four Jewish brothers, led by Judah Maccabee, decided to raise up an army of religious freedom fighters. These men of fierce faith and loyalty to God became known as the Maccabees. The small band of warriors fought for three years with "strength from heaven" until achieving a miraculous victory and deliverance from the Greco-Syrian control.

After regaining the Temple, it was cleansed by the Maccabees, cleared of all Greek idolatry, and readied for rededicated. The rededication of the Temple to the Lord took place in the year 165 BC, on the 25th day of the Hebrew month called Kislev.

So Chanukkah received its name, the Feast of Dedication, because it celebrates the Maccabees' victory over Greek oppression and the rededication of the temple. But Hanukkah is also known as the Festival of Lights, and this is because immediately following the miraculous deliverance, God provided another miracle of provision.

In the Temple, the eternal flame of God was to be lit at all time as a symbol of God's presence. But according to tradition, when the Temple was rededicated, there was only enough oil left in the temple to burn the flame

for one day. The rest of the oil had been defiled by the Greeks during their invasion, and it would take a week for new oil to be processed and purified. But at the rededication, the Maccabees went ahead and lit the eternal flame with the remaining supply of oil, and God's Holy presence caused it to burn miraculously for eight days, until the new sacred oil was ready.

This is why the feast is also called the Festival of Lights, and why the Chanukkah Menorah is lit for eight consecutive nights of celebration. Jews also commemorate this miracle of oil provision by making oil-rich foods.

Jesus and the Feast of Dedication:

John 10: 22-23 records, "Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade." (NIV) As a Jew, Jesus most certainly would have participated in the Feast of Dedication.

The same courageous spirit of the Maccabees who remained faithful to God during intense persecution was passed on to Jesus' disciples who would all face severe trails because of their faithfulness to Christ. And like the miracle of God's presence expressed through the eternal flame of God burning for the Maccabees, Jesus became the incarnate, physical expression of God's presence, the Light of the World, who came to dwell among us and give us the eternal light of God's life.