



HANNUKAH

DEC.7-15



John records in his 10th chapter that Jesus honored and walked to the temple in Jerusalem during this time also called the Feast of Dedication or the Lesser Feast of Lights. The Greater Feast of Lights is the Feast of Tabernacles in the fall, which is the real birth of Jesus. Jesus was Jewish, and our Christian forefathers were Jewish, including Peter who the Catholic church recognizes as the first pope. So why shouldn't we that read a Jewish Bible at least understand their God-given customs to help us see how God uses their ways to teach us magnificent truths? So here's the miraculous story of Hanukkah! (2Maccabees in Apocrypha, and Josephus, a first century historian)

15 years after Alexander the Great died and all his heirs were murdered, the Grecian Empire was divided amongst four generals. (Dan.11:4) The Eastern area included Israel, Lebanon, Syria, with Babylon under the leadership of The Seluecids from Syria. The 5th son of this dynasty, in 175 BC, was King Antiochus IV, also called *Epiphanes*, meaning God Manifest, which he himself chose (indicating his arrogance). He eventually became known as *Epimane*,s which means madman (in response to his cruelty).

He was probably one of the most anti-Jewish, anti-Israel, anti-God rulers in history. He forced Greek paganism (Hellenism) on the Jews, for whom idol worship had previously been optional. In 169 BC, Antiochus Epiphanes visited Jerusalem, entered the Holy of Holies, killed and took many captives, stole gold and silver, stopped temple sacrifices, and broke the peace treaty he had made.

Then in 167 BC, he erected a Greek altar and a statue of himself with the head of the idol god Zeus and slew swine upon the altar. Then the Hellenist army brought in their idols forcing the Jews to worship them, while banning circumcision, the study of Torah, the observance of Sabbath and forcing them to eat forbidden unclean pork. Sadly, many Jews assimilated into the Greek culture, yet a remnant held strong, for which they underwent great torments: whippings that would tear their bodies to pieces and many more various types of torture.

Finally Mattathias, the High Priest with his 5 sons from the family of Hashmon started an heroic revolt, killing some soldiers in Modiin, then fleeing to the hill country along with anyone who would join, where they trained to become guerilla fighters. Mattathias died in the first year of the revolt and was succeeded by his son Judah, (type of Jesus) known as the Maccabee, meaning hammer.

After 4 major battles, the Maccabees were victorious, ousting the evil King and his Seleucid army. But their joy soon turned to bitterness when they saw the Temple's abomination, where pigs had been sacrificed and Greek gods erected. They set to work, and on the 25th of Kislev in 165 BC, the temple had been cleansed and ready to be rededicated. When it came time to light the menorah, which had to remain lit all the time, they could only find one small flask of olive oil, enough for only one day. Here is the real miracle: this special oil miraculously stayed lit for eight days, till more oil could be specially pressed, a procedure that takes at least a week to process.

This holiday became very important in the lives of the Jewish people, each night they light another candle for eight days with the middle ninth candle called the "shamash" or servant candle. Since this candle contains 9 branches instead of 7, it is called a "Hanukkiah" and differs from the menorah which has seven lights. Since we know history repeats itself, and Jesus warned in His word in Matthew 24 and also in Daniel 9 that this would happen again, we can see how yet another terrible ruler will break a peace treaty, cause an abomination in the temple (so one must be built again), and do everything he can to eradicate, once again, the Jewish people as has been true all throughout history.

Jesus is the light of the world, as we too should be a light in a dark world. Many who study the roots of Christianity know He was born in the fall (the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles-(Tishrei 15). It is also called The Greater Feast of Lights (for during Temple days the Jews would light these enormous 75 foot candles), and John 1:1 says, "He came to tabernacle amongst us".

Counting back 280 days (normal pregnancy time) brings us to exactly the 8th day of Hanukkah, also known as the Lesser Feast of Lights, the day that Mary would have been incarnated by the Holy Spirit when Jesus took up residence in her womb after sundown on Tevet 1; a new moon and a new life from heaven, and then born in the fullness of time on a full moon! (Gal.4:4)

So knowing this, which occurs always near the Christmas season you have another important reason to celebrate, for His incarnation is the greater miracle. But regardless of your eschatological stance, the most important reason to celebrate His Feasts is because you have Jesus birthed in your own heart and have a personal relationship with Him, being willing as the Maccabee's, to take a stand for the freedom of your faith. Then every day is Christmas for **YOU!**