

God's Everlasting Covenant

presents

The Joy of Chanukah

Chanukah, sometimes spelled Hanukkah, is a minor feast in Judaism, and unfortunately, it is greatly misunderstood by many Christians today. Many believe it is not a biblical holiday, but we hope to bring new light and understanding to this important celebration, which can be enjoyed by believing Jews and Christians alike in the spirit of One New Man in Messiah.

Chanukah means “dedication” in Hebrew. The word is spelled with the letters: Chet-Noon-Kaf-Hey.

Five Reasons to keep Chanukah

According to Pastor Mark Biltz of El Shaddai Ministries, there are five reasons to Keep Chanukah:

1. Yeshua kept Chanukah.
2. Chanukah is about rededicating God's Temple. If we as believers are God's living temples, don't we need to rededicate ourselves to the LORD? We need to clean out our sanctuary (our body, our minds) once in awhile and “keep it clean!”
3. Chanukah is all about being persecuted for righteousness sake.
4. Chanukah is about not hiding your light under a bushel.
5. Chanukah prophetically will happen again.

Many have aptly said that the one thing that humans always seem to learn from history is that we don't learn from history. Unfortunately, things that have happened before tend to repeat themselves. Winston Churchill said, “If we don't learn from history, we are doomed to repeat it.” The Bible shows us that there are many patterns for how people live and how things happen. It's kind of like the rules or parameters for getting a “blessing” or a “cursing.” We will repeat them, good and bad. What we want to do is learn from the bad things and not repeat them, and also learn from the good things and to mirror our lives after those patterns. So too, Chanukah will also happen again one day, and we're going to see that later on. Chanukah teaches us some valuable lessons and has prophetic implications, as we will see. So we need to understand what's behind Chanukah. Matthew 24 is all about Chanukah happening again.

Biblical pattern for the number eight – Chanukah is in the Bible

First, we will set up a foundation of understanding. The first thing to realize is that eight days is a biblical pattern for dedication. Chanukah is kept for eight days, and we also

know that something else important happens on the eighth day: Circumcision. Let's turn to Exodus 22:29, 30.

Exodus 22:29, 30: "Do not hold back offerings from your granaries or your vats. You must give me the firstborn of your sons. Do the same with your cattle and your sheep. Let them stay with their mothers for seven days, but give them to me on the eighth day."

So this teaches us that whether it be sons, crops, animals – whatever Israel produced, it becomes God's on eighth day. The eighth day is a pattern for sanctification and dedication.

About 1500 BCE, we have the story of Moses completing the setting up of the tabernacle.

Nu 7:1, 88b: "When Moses finished setting up the tabernacle, he anointed it and consecrated it and all its furnishings. He also anointed and consecrated the altar and its utensils." And verse 88b says, "These were the offerings for the dedication (Chet-Noon-Kaf-Hey) of the altar after it was anointed."

This is telling us that they *Chanukah'd* the tabernacle!

Strong's #2598 (Chet-Noon-Kaf-hey) *Chanukah* = from 2596; initiation, i.e. consecration:--dedicating(-tion).

#2596 *chanak* = a primitive root; properly, to narrow; figuratively, to initiate or discipline:--dedicate, train up.

Lev 9:1, 23, 24: "On the eighth day Moses summoned Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel; Moses and Aaron then went into the tabernacle. When they came out, they blessed the people; and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. Fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar. And when all the people saw it, they shouted for joy and fell facedown."

Before we move on, can you imagine seeing that? Picture this: the people are all gathered together. They have just finished building the tabernacle, and the Priests are about to place the first sacrifices on the altar. And the glory of the LORD shows up. And then, fire comes down from heaven and consumes the burnt offering. Wow! That must have been something to see.

Anyway, then we move to about 500 years later – 1000 BCE.

2 Chron 7:1, 9: "When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the Temple. And the priests could not enter the Temple of the LORD because the glory of the LORD filled it; On the eighth day they held an assembly, for they had celebrated the dedication (Chet-Noon-Kaf-Hey) of the altar and the feast for seven days more ." In other words, they celebrated the *Chanukah* of the altar for seven days more.

Now, we're going to go to about 700 BCE

2 Chron 28:22-25

Hezekiah's father, Ahaz was an evil king. He was probably the most wicked king that Israel ever had. God is trying to get Judah to repent. He's using Assyria to attack them, "...In the time of trouble King Ahaz became even more unfaithful to the LORD. He offered sacrifices to the gods of Damascus, who had defeated him; for he thought, "Since the gods of the kings of Aram (Syria) have helped them, I will sacrifice to them so they will help me." So Ahaz, rather than repent and turning to the LORD, he says, "We'll just worship their gods."

2 Chron 29:15-17: "When they had assembled their brothers and consecrated themselves, they went in to purify the Temple of the LORD, as the king had ordered, following the word of the LORD. The priests went into the sanctuary of the LORD to purify it. They brought out to the courtyard of the LORD's Temple everything unclean that they found in the Temple of the LORD. The Levites took it and carried it out to the Kidron Valley. They began the consecration on the first day of the first month, and by the eighth day of the month they reached the portico of the LORD. For eight more days they consecrated the Temple of the LORD itself, finishing on the sixteenth day of the first month."

This was during Hezekiah's time as King. He was twenty-five years old, and after his father Ahaz had completely defiled everything, he had to get in and cleanse the Temple and rededicate it again. The lesson for us is that we need to get into our temple (our body) and cleanse the dark chambers and rededicate ourselves to the LORD. Eight days is the number for sanctification, dedication.

The glory of the Lord departs from Jerusalem

A couple hundred years after that, you have the Babylonian captivity. Jeremiah is in Israel. Ezekiel is in Babylon. And Ezekiel has a vision of the glory of the LORD departing from the Temple and Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 10:4: Then the glory of the LORD rose from above the cherubim and moved to the threshold of the Temple. The cloud filled the Temple, and the court was full of the radiance of the glory of the LORD.

Ezekiel 10:18, 19: Then the glory of the LORD departed from over the threshold of the Temple and stopped above the cherubim. While I watched, the cherubim spread their wings and rose from the ground, and as they went the wheels went with them. They stopped at the entrance to the east gate of the LORD's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.

So the glory of the LORD is leaving, and notice it stops at the east gate, known as the Beautiful gate (also known as the Mercy gate and Golden gate).

Now, we're going to look at Ezekiel 11:22-23: Then the cherubim, with the wheels beside them, spread their wings and the glory of the God of Israel was above them. The glory of the LORD went up from within the city and stopped above the mountain east of it.

What mountain is on the east side of the city of Jerusalem? The Mount of Olives. Now stop and think about this for a moment. The Temple faced east, and the glory of the LORD ascended from the Mt. of Olives. It stopped over the eastern gate, and then it stopped on the Mount of Olives before it departed.

I want to tell you a story about the faithfulness of the LORD. I remember reading in Ezekiel several months ago, and these verses really caught my attention. And I specifically remember asking the LORD why His glory left in this way – why did He stop over the eastern gate and rest there, and then move to the Mount of Olives and rest there? I knew this had some significance. Immediately, the thought came to mind that it was because of Yeshua's Second Coming. Zechariah tells us his feet will touch on the Mount of Olives, and elsewhere in the Prophets, that He will go up to the Temple through the eastern gate. But in my spirit, I sensed there was another reason. And I asked the LORD to show me. This study is the answer to that prayer, and you'll see that as we go on.

The glory of the Lord departs again...

Who else do we know that ascended from the Mount of Olives? 600 years later, the glory of the LORD literally ascended from the Mount of Olives. Isn't it wonderful how God keeps repeating things so we will get it!!! I just love that about Him!

Acts 1:11-12: "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Yeshua (Jesus), who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives...

Yeshua ascended from the Mount of Olives! So the disciples are told that this is the way Yeshua will return to the earth. The glory of the LORD departed from this very spot again when Yeshua ascended from there!

Zech 14:3,4: Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem...

In Acts, it says the glory of the LORD left from the Mount of Olives, but in Zechariah, it says the glory of the LORD will come back to the Mount of Olives. Now, I want to show you something else you might not have ever seen before. Ezekiel has another vision of the future, when the glory returns.

Ezekiel 43:1-2a: Then the man brought me to the gate facing east, and I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east.

Now, this can be compared to Matthew 24:27 where it says, “For as lightening that comes from the east to the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.” And we know that the glory returns from the east to the west.

Continuing on in Ezekiel 43:2b: His voice was like the roar of rushing waters, and the land was radiant with his glory...” This can be compared to Rev 1:15 when the apostle John talked about Messiah’s voice being “like the sound of rushing waters.”

Back to Ezekiel and skipping to verse 4-5: The glory of the LORD entered the Temple through the gate facing east. Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of the LORD filled the Temple.

Are you seeing the pattern?

Ezekiel was written roughly 586-587 BC. The scriptures of Ezekiel were over 500 years old by the time of the disciples. Think about it -- our constitution is only 200 years old. They had Ezekiel for over 500 years! So, they were familiar with Ezekiel. Do you think they had heard it read? Of course they did, and they knew Messiah was going to come from the east. Now, the Temple already existed. They aren’t thinking of a new Temple. They are thinking of the existing Temple that had been defiled by the Babylonians, and later by the Romans, and Antiochus, and we need to cleanse it and rededicate it. This is what was on their minds during the time of Chanukah -- this is what they were thinking about.

Rededication of the temple after the Babylonian captivity

So, let’s go back to about 500 BCE. Nebuchadnezzar had already destroyed the Temple. Ezra and Nehemiah had come back to Jerusalem, and they had to rebuild the walls of the city and the Temple and rededicate it.

Ezra 6:3a, 5a, 16: In the first year of King Cyrus, the king issued a decree concerning the Temple of God in Jerusalem: Let the Temple be rebuilt as a place to present sacrifices, and let its foundations be laid; Also, the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the Temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon are to be returned to their places in the Temple in Jerusalem; Then the people of Israel – the priests, the Levites and the rest of the exiles – celebrated the dedication (Chet-Noon-Kaf-Hey) of the house of God with joy...

Chanukah is prophecy fulfilled in Daniel

Now, we’re going back to the Babylonian captivity. Daniel and Ezekiel are together in Babylon, and Daniel has a vision about the future.

Dan 8:3-8: I looked up, and there before me was a ram with two horns, standing beside the canal, and the horns were long. One of the horns was longer than the other but

grew up later. I watched the ram as he charged toward the west and the north and the south. No animal could stand against him, and one could rescue from his power. He did as he pleased and became great. As I was thinking about this, suddenly a goat with a prominent horn between his eyes came from the west, crossing the whole earth without touching the ground. He came toward the two-horned ram I had seen standing beside the canal and charged at him in great rage. I saw him attack the ram furiously, striking the ram and shattering his two horns. The ram was powerless to stand against him; the goat knocked him to the ground and trampled on him, and none could rescue the ram from his power. The goat became very great, but at the height of his power his great horn was broken off, and in its place four prominent horns grew up toward the four winds of heaven.

We're going to see something about the word "great" here in a few minutes. God is so gracious that He gives us "hints" in scripture, so that those who have eyes to see and ears to hear will get it when it happens.

Dan 8:9-14: Out of one of them came another horn, which started small but grew in power to the south and to the east and toward the Beautiful Land (Israel). It grew until it reached the host of the heavens, and it threw some of the starry host down to the earth and trampled on them. He set himself up to be as great as the Prince of the host; he took away the daily sacrifice from him, and the place of his sanctuary was brought low. Because of the rebellion, the host of the saints and the daily sacrifice were given over to it. It prospered in everything it did, and truth was thrown to the ground. Then I heard the holy one speaking, and another holy one said to him, "How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled – the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, and the surrender of the sanctuary and of the host that will be trampled underfoot?" He said to me, "It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be rededicated." (Chanukah).

What a lot of people don't realize is that this has all been fulfilled. Let's read Dan 8:20-22: The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia. The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the great horn between his eyes is the first king. 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.

Remember when I said that we would see something from the word "great"? Who was the king of Greece with the great horn? Alexander the Great!

In about 331 BCE, Alexander the Great of Greece defeats Darius III in the battle of Arbels, becoming the ruler of the Persian empire at the age of 23. Alexander died about 9 years later at the age of 32. This is the great horn of Daniel being broken. A struggle for power ensues between his four generals, which are the four horns of Daniel.

Seleucis had control of Syria and Eastern Asia Minor
Ptolemy had Egypt

Lysimachus was in charge of Western Asia Minor (Turkey)
Casander had Macedonia (Greece)

Assimilation or Annihilation!

Fast forward to 171 BCE. Antiochus IV is ruling Syria. He called himself Antiochus Epiphanes, which means “God manifest”. Talk about arrogance! Well, the Jews called him Antiochus Epimanes – it’s a play on words that means “Antiochus the madman.” During the previous 200 years, Israel was considered a strategic geographic region, and she had been tossed around between the powers of Syria and Egypt as they tried to dominate the area. There were two political factions in Israel at the time:

1. Orthodox or religious, who prefer that Egypt rule because they allowed them freedom of worship
2. Progressive Hellenist party of the Aristocracy, who didn’t care about the faith of the Fathers and just wanted to be like the other nations – they saw an economic and social advantage in appearing enlightened and civilized and they wanted the acceptance of the other nations.

So, this is a battle of the Jewish versus the Greek mindset. There were those who wanted to keep themselves holy and separated from the rest of the nations. And there were those who wanted to assimilate and become like the nations. Hello!!!! Does this sound familiar? Isn’t this what is going on today in Israel? And isn’t this the constant battle of for those of us who want to follow God’s ways, and remain pure versus following the world’s ways? There’s nothing new under the sun!

Back to our history – during Antiochus IV, the High Priest was vehemently opposed to Hellenism and the pagan Greek culture trying to encroach upon Judaism with their mythical gods and the worship of Zeus. But the High Priest’s brother goes to Antiochus and makes a deal with Greece -- if they will allow him to be High Priest, he’ll help them with the Jews, so he kills his brother! This pushes Israel into Hellenism.

Then, we go to 168 BCE. Antiochus IV is at war against Egypt (he wants Ptolemy’s territory) and victory seems certain when Rome intervenes (these are the ships of the western coastlands or Kittim who oppose him in Daniel 11:30). On his way back, he vents his fury on Jerusalem and orders his generals to destroy it. In three days, 40,000 are killed and 40,000 are sold into slavery. Antiochus is told he can serve Rome or do his own thing. The Roman general forces him to decide. Antiochus decides to serve Rome, but he is furious. He then erects an idol of Zeus and places it in the Temple. He sacrifices a pig on the altar and sprinkles the blood all over the Torah scrolls, the Holy of Holies. He cuts the Torah scrolls into pieces and burns them on the altar. Then he enacts law that forbids the keeping of the Sabbath, the dietary laws, circumcision, keeping the festival calendar, or even having copies of the Torah scrolls. Then he stripped the Temple of everything, and took away the gold, silver, Temple instruments. He imposed Greek language, culture, and religion (idol worship). Anyone caught practicing Judaism was put to death.

Look at Daniel 11:30: He (Antiochus) will turn back and vent his fury against the holy covenant. He will return and show favor to those who forsake the holy covenant.

So, he destroys those who uphold Torah, and gives favor to those who forsake it. This is another teaching, but the holy covenant is the ketubah, the marriage contract that God made with His people at Mt. Sinai. So, Antiochus wanted to destroy those who wanted to keep the marriage covenant. To those who were willing to break it, he showed favor. It's very clear.

Then go down to verse 33: Those who are wise will instruct many, though for a time they will fall by the sword, or be burned or captured or plundered.

This goes perfectly with Hebrews 11:33-38. Hebrews 11 is the faith chapter. These verses tell all about what happened to God's people throughout the history of the Bible. "...who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated – the world was not worthy of them. And in verse 38, it is specifically includes what happened to the people during the time of Chanukah: "They wandered in deserts and mountains and in caves and holes in the ground." Historically, it is going right down the line, and this is referring to the Jews during Chanukah. In fact, I have been to the holes in the ground that are believed to be the caves of the Maccabees near the town of Modi'in.

So, it was about assimilation or annihilation! This was not only a struggle between Jew and Gentile but also a battle between those Jews who wanted to uphold Torah and those non-religious Jews and Gentiles who wanted to destroy it! It was not the Gentiles of the Selucid empire that get the strongest condemnation of that day -- it was the lawless apostates among the Jewish people! In fact, there is a verse in the Messianic Writings [New Testament] that parallels this. Speaking of the Antichrist, it is written in 2 Th 2:8: And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom Yeshua the Messiah will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.

#459 *anomos* = lawless, i.e. (negatively) not subject to (the Jewish) law; (by implication, a Gentile), or (positively) wicked:--without law, lawless, transgressor, unlawful, wicked.

That's who Antichrist will be. He will be lawless or without Torah. *Nomos* is the Greek translation of *Torah*. Remember Haman from the Book of Esther? He wanted to annihilate all the Jews. Well Antiochus wanted to annihilate Torah! He wanted to completely eliminate it from the lives of the Jewish people, forever! You see, in my view, and in the view of other Hebraic roots teachers, the Antichrist won't be like

Haman (at first) – he'll be like Antiochus Epiphanes. It won't be about annihilation. It will be about assimilation. This is why so many in the church will, unfortunately, be deceived.

Historical account

So, now we are going to talk a little about the historical account of what happened and how the annual celebration of Chanukah began. An old Levitical priest named Mattathias was ordered to slay a pig on an altar in the small town of Modi'in, which is about 17 miles NW of Jerusalem. Rather than obey, Mattathias killed the man. This began the rebellion of the Maccabees, which led to more than two decades of fighting that resulted in the expulsion of the Selucids from what was then called Palestine. There was a decisive battle in about 164 BCE when Jerusalem was recaptured and back in Jewish control. This led to the subsequent cleansing and rededication of the Temple. Well, the story is recorded in the Talmud that there was very little oil left that hadn't been desecrated by the Greeks, and they only had enough for one day. The oil was used to light the Menorah, and the seven lamps had to burn all day and all night. So, the priests had a choice – they could wait until there was enough consecrated oil, which would take another seven days, or go ahead and begin Temple worship with the one day's worth of oil. They chose to do the latter, and according to the legend, the lamps miraculously burned for eight days!

Chanukah is not just the celebration from foreign oppression but of freedom of worship in the way God requires.

Chanukah is a picture of Yeshua - the light of the world who cleanses us so the glory of the Lord can live in His temple!

Now, let's go to the Messianic Writings and see what's there.

John 10:22, 23: Then came the Feast of Dedication (Chanukah) at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the Temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade (or the porch of Solomon). The Jews gathered around him saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly."

Now it is Chanukah. And the Jews are looking for the Messiah to come and cleanse the Temple. See, the High Priest was appointed by Herod. He wasn't a Levite. So, in their minds, the Temple was somewhat defiled. They were looking for a deliverer to free them from Roman oppression and wanted to get back to worshipping God the way He required. They wanted their city and the Temple cleansed! So, I believe the Scriptures put Yeshua at the Temple on Chanukah to make a point. John wants us to see something here.

Where was Solomon's porch or Colonnade? It was on the east side. So where were they looking when these Jewish leaders saw Yeshua? They were looking east toward the Mount of Olives. They were looking for the ultimate deliverer, the Messiah Himself, who would overthrow Roman rule and begin the Messianic age, making it possible for the glory of the LORD to return to the Temple! And there He was, right in front of their eyes!

See sometimes, we think we understand something, but really, it is something different than what we think, or what we've been taught. Many of us have been taught that Chanukah isn't in the Bible, and that it is one of those "extra" biblical things that the Jewish people celebrate because of tradition. Not only is it a real, historical event that actually took place in the time period between the Tanakh (Old Testament) and the Messianic Writings (New Testament), but Chanukah is also "hidden" all through the Tanakh because, like many biblical truths, we don't see it in the English. It is veiled in a sense. But when we look at the Hebrew words, we can see that all along, Chanukah has been there. It is a picture that God gave us and it teaches us several valuable truths that apply to us today.

- First, Chanukah teaches us to keep holy, to live according to God's teachings and instructions, and to keep our earthly temples (our bodies and minds) clean and sanctified, set apart for Him. Out of our love for Him, we want to stay far away from anything that defiles our living Temple, which is the house of God.
- Second, Chanukah teaches us that we will be persecuted for righteousness, but we should not to assimilate and become like the world, even at the threat of our annihilation.
- Third, Chanukah teaches us not to hide our light under a bushel. We want to share with others about God's teachings and instructions, and how they can become a living Temple of the LORD, and have their own sanctuary cleansed through belief in the one who cleanses us from sin, Yeshua.
- Finally, Chanukah teaches us that Chanukah will happen again! The glory of the LORD, Yeshua the Messiah, will literally return as Zechariah says, to the Mount of Olives! Once again, the LORD will reside in His Temple on the earth, in Jerusalem. From there, He will reign over every nation, tribe, people and tongue. We who have believed in Him will see Him, and we will be instantly changed by the brightness of His glory. We will never again be defiled or tainted by sin, and we will behold Him face to face, in all His majesty, beauty, power and splendor. The Eternal Light of the World will finally dwell with men! This is the joy of Chanukah!