**LIGHT and DEDICATION**

R. Giglio 12/13/20

**JESUS and HANUKKAH**

We have seen God do incredible things this past and have every reason to believe that he will continue to do “Great things” in the year to come.

We are now in the season of Hanukkah, the 8-day “Festival of Dedication” (a.k.a. **Feast of Lights** or **Hanukkah – *which means “Dedication*”**)

As we say reflect on the past year and all that has transpired, I want us to look forward into this next season with increased expectancy and a renewed commitment to what God has for us in our lives.

**Phil 1:6** “Be confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ”

He who has begun a good work in you and in this church, will not let you down, He will complete it.

It’s important that we don’t give up, that we walk through every moment that God chose us to live, that we expect great things from a great God as we look to the future AND that we renew our dedication to Jesus.

Dedicating/committing yourself fully to Him will allow Him to complete the very thing he has created you for, and the purposes he has destined you for.

**Romans 12:1-2 “**I beseechyou therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. **2**And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

This verse is about **dedication**. Paul exhorts us to *dedicate ourselves fully*, like a sacrifice to God, so that we would be transformed and renewed. Then we will experience the “*good and acceptable and perfect will of God*.”

Basically he is telling us that if we commit fully to God (Body, Mind and Soul), we will experience all the goodness that God wills for us in our lives.

My hope for all of us, as we wind down one year and start planning for the next, is that we don’t do anything, until we dedicate ourselves fully to God.

*What better time to begin, then the FEAST of DEDICATION?*

**Feast of Dedication *(a.k.a. Hanukkah, Feast of Lights)***

This 8-Day festival commemorates the *re-dedication* of the Temple after it was desecrated in 168BC.

It is celebrated by the lighting of a Hanukkiah Menorah and telling the story of the miracle of the day’s supply of lamp oil that is said to have miraculously lasted for 8 days*.*

It’s not a story found in most Bibles, it’s written in the books of Maccabees in the Apocrypha.

It takes place during the *intertestamental period* (years between the Old Testament and New Testament)

167 BC Judea was ruled by Antiochus IV (he called himself *Epiphanes*, which means the manifestation of God) about 150 years after the Greeks conquered this region under *Alexander the Great.*

Antiochus was a ruthless dictator and outlawed the Jewish religion, punishable by death.

He captured the Holy Temple and desecrated it, killing its priests and sacrificing a pig on the altar.

A Jewish Zealot by the name of Judah Maccabee and his five brothers started a revolt in an effort to chase the Seleucid/Greek army out of Jerusalem and recapture the temple.

They were miraculously successful even against tremendous odds.

They recaptured the temple and rededicated it to the Lord.

“Hanukkah” means Dedication.

The miracle of the oil is *not found* in the Hebrew scriptures but *is found* in other ancient writings about this event.

The story says that the Maccabees only had one day’s supply of oil and needed eight days to dedicated that way *Solomon* initially did it in 2nd Chron. 7.

We are told that one day’s supply lasted for eight days and they considered it a miracle that should be celebrated every year saying:

*“Nes Gadol Haya Sham*” - *“A great miracle happened there”* (Nun, Gimmel, Hay, Shin)

***Our Family: Lights Menorah for 8 nights, prays specific prayers (Al HaNissim, Ma’oz tzur), Plays Dreidel, Eats Latkes / Sufganiyot* , and Kids get presents : )**

Hanukkah is **not** one of the seven annual Hebrew feasts in Lev 23, and according to the very religious Jews is **not** one of the major holidays.

So why should we, as Christians care about this, or any “Jewish” holidays for that matter.

The answer is very simple…***because Jesus did.***He observed ALL the Holidays!

Jesus was very Jewish as were ALL his apostles. Not only was he Jewish, but he was such an Orthodox (fully-adherent) Jew that:

* He was called upon to speak in the synagogue (Luke 4)
* He was called “Rabbi whom God has sent to teach us” by a well-known Pharisee (Nicodemus in John 3)
* After he was arrested, the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin tried to find any fault with him or His adherence to Jewish law and found nothing. (Mark 14)

What about the apostles? Didn’t they “Jettison their Jewishness” after Pentecost?

No, They were all in Jerusalem for Pentecost (Shavuot) because they were required to be there for the holiday under Jewish law.

The Holy Spirit fell in a powerful way on this particular annual Pentecost celebration and they were filled with power and boldness.

But instead of doing away with their Jewishness and starting a separate religion. They continued in their Jewishness having the completion of Messiah and the fulfillment of prophecy (Joel 2) upon them.

The first thing they did after Pentecost (Acts 2) is go right back to the temple to pray, as they normally would (Acts 3)

Even as the church began to grow and expand, and the well-known Pharisee named Saul of Tarsus became a follower of Jesus and a leader in the church, they STILL were considered a “sect” of Judaism.

Tertullis, a lawyer for the High Priest speaking to Felix the Roman Governor called the whole movement “A sect of Judaism”, which is what it started out as, long before it began to be called Christianity.

**Acts 24:5** "We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the *Nazarene sect.”*

We see all through the New Testament that Jewish believers, while no longer bound by the law for *forgiveness of their sins,* continued to honor and observe “Appointed Times”, known as “Jewish Holidays”. *(Passover, Feast of Tabernacles, etc ...)*

**What about Hanukkah?**

In John 10, during the Hanukkah celebration in Jerusalem Jesus attends the celebration and while he was there, He made a statement that was probably the most controversial yet profound statement that he spoke up to that point.

**John 10:22-33** **“22**Then came the Festival of Dedication[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2010&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26504b)] at Jerusalem. It was winter, **23**and Jesus was in the temple courts walking in Solomon’s Colonnade. **24**The Jews who were there gathered around him, saying, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.”

**25**Jesus answered, “I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father’s name testify about me, **26**but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. **27**My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. **28**I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. **29**My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2010&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26511c)]; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. **30**I and the Father are one.”

**31**Again his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him, **32**but Jesus said to them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?”

**33**“We are not stoning you for any good work,” they replied, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.”

John 10:30 ***“I and the Father are one.”***

This single statement ***“I and the Father are one.”*** which he chose to make during Hanukkah, the “festival of lights”, almost got him killed (stoned) on the spot.

What it *did do* was start the timeclock toward the crucifixion.

The next chapter (John 11) the Pharisees put the plan in place to kill Jesus.

In chapter 12 Jesus rides into Jerusalem openly and publicly on a donkey, essentially giving himself up for the final week of his life before the cross.

 This truth about being “one with the Father”, was the very thing the Gospel of John first speaks about when he described Jesus’s birth as; “He was with God and Was God” and He is the “Light coming into the world”.

This is why it is so appropriate that The Light of the world made this “*Big Reveal”* at his final Hanukkah (also known as festival of lights). He was *one with God* from the very beginning.

* John 1:1-2In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2**He was with God in the beginning.
* John 1:9-10 “The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

* John 1:14 **“**The Word *became flesh* and made his dwelling among us.”

*Jesus is the light of the world!*

**John 8:12** “**I am the light of the world**. The one who follows me will no longer walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life.”

He was born into a very very dark world.

*(as we mentioned last week)*

The brutal Roman Empire had conquered the region in 63BC and placed a cruel dynasty of Hasmonaeans over the region including Herod the Great who was given the title “King of the Jews”. They placed corrupt High Priests in the temple to control the people and extort large sums of money and taxes from anyone who wanted to worship the One True God.

It was so brutal, that even the mention of a baby being born in the kingdom that might possibly be the Messiah, caused Herod to kill all the little boys in Bethlehem 2-yrs-old and under.

That is the dark world that Jesus was born into.

Jesus was and is the only light in our dark world. Without him there would be nothing but darkness.

***Think about what the world would be like today if Jesus was never born. If Society just got more and more evil every century.***

***Void of love, kindness, compassion, and goodness.***

***How dark would this world be without Jesus****?*

The prophecy about Jesus being born unto us starts out talking about how dark the world was, and will be when the Messiah comes into it.

* **Isaiah 9:2** The people walking in darkness
    have seen a great light; on those living in the land of *deep darkness* *a light has dawned*. (…verse 6 “Unto us a child is born”)
* **Isaiah 60:1-2** ““Arise, shine, for your light has come,
    and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.
**2**See, darkness covers the earth
    and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you
    and his glory appears over you.” ***[Our logo -  ]***
* **Isaiah 49:6 “**I will also make you a light for the Gentiles,
    that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”

When Jesus was born, He was taken by Joseph and Mary to the temple to be dedicated. The *same temple in Jerusalem* that was rededicated by the Maccabees and consecrated before the Lord.

While they were there they met a very interesting old man named Simeon who was told by God that he would night die until he has seen the Messiah. :

**Luke 2:28-32** **28**Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

**29**“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
    you may now dismissyour servant in peace. **30**For my eyes have seen your **salvation**, **31**which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: **32**a **light** for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”

Jesus is our salvation and our light.

Without Him our lives are destined for darkness.

We become easy targets for the thief who comes to kill, steal and destroy and keep us from the great things that God has for us and wants to do through us.

**John 10:10** The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

When we *dedicate ourselves fully* to Him however, we will see our path illuminated and the good things he has for us come into view. He fills us with the “LIGHT OF LIFE”.

We have to be careful however, NOT to fill ourselves with darkness.

**Matt 6:22-23** “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. **23**But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!”

What we allow to come into our eyes, will enter our mind and heart. That means it will fill us with *either* light or darkness. This includes, news, print, online content (not just inappropriate; but unpleasant, inflammatory and divisive,

also, movies, even articles and social media posts.

Ask yourself, do they make my eyes, healthy or unhealthy?

Do they bring in light, or darkness?

It is so important that we *Walk in The Light*, because when we do He fills us with His light and we have fellowship with God AND with *one another,*

But when we are *not* walking in His light, We are missing out on true fellowship with God and are also missing out on fellowship with each other.

**1st John 1:7 “**If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from allsin.

Sin is the separator.

It separates us from God, and from one another.

When we walk in His, light He purifies us from all sin, and we have true fellowship with God and with one another.

That’s Our Calling…

**1 Peter 2:9** “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you *out of darkness into his wonderful light.”*

Hanukkah, the festival of lights is the perfect time to ask the *Light of the World* to fill our lives and illuminate any darkness that exists in us. It’s a perfect time to ***rededicate*** ourselves to God and commit to walking in His light.

Just as we lit/light the candles of the Feast of *Dedication*, Let’s *dedicate ourselves* to walking in the light this coming season so that we can have full fellowship with Him and Each other,

and also, let’s *dedicate ourselves* to sharing the light that is within us, with those who are walking in darkness, so they can have fellowship with Jesus as well.

**Prayer of Dedication**