



water from rock

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen- December 12, 2023

The Lord be with you.

And I also want to say happy Hanukkah. That's right. I am a Christian who likes to celebrate Hanukkah because our Lord Jesus Christ celebrated Hanukkah. And this year I am joining my Jewish friends and neighbors in bold defiance of anti-Semitism to celebrate Hanukkah, but being a Christian, well, of course, I want to look to the New Testament to see if it has anything to say about Hanukkah.

And I'm looking to the New Testament Gospel of John chapter 10 verses 22 through 23 where it says at that time, the festival of the dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter and Jesus was walking in the temple in the Portico of Solomon. Now we're gonna see in a moment that what John's Gospel calls the festival of dedication. Well, that's Hanukkah, that's what Hanukkah means. It's, it's the Hebrew word for dedication. A festival of dedication as Jesus has come to Jerusalem to the temple to celebrate Hanukkah.

But what exactly is Hanukkah? And why does Hanukkah matter for us as Christians? Hanukkah is not a feast commanded in the law of Moses in the Old Testament, but it is a feast of festival that begins in that period between the Old and New Testaments between the last book of the Old Testament Malachi and the first book of the New Testament Matthew. It goes back to the time of a Syrian king who reigned from the years 175 to 164 before Christ as he invades the Jewish nation demanding that they abandon the worship of the God of Israel. The king has taken to himself the name Antiochus Epiphanes. Epiphanes means God manifested. He actually thinks he's God and he wants to turn the Jews away from the worship of God to worship him. And, and so one of the first things that he does, he defiles, he desecrates the temple in Jerusalem as he offers a pig as a sacrifice on the temple altar. He offers that pig as a sacrifice to the Greek God Zeus. And he turns the temple courts into brothels. He outlaws the Sabbath. He makes it a capital offense to possess a copy of the Torah or to circumcise a child.

But thank God for a man named Judah nicknamed the Hammer in Hebrew. That's Maccabee. So this is Judah Maccabee, Judah the Hammer who rises up and leads a small band of soldiers in a guerilla warfare against Antiochus Epiphanes. And after a three year struggle, they defeat Antiochus Epiphanes on the 25th of Kev that's in our month of December and on the 25th of Kev in the year 164 BC Judah, the hammer and a small army. They take back the temple in Jerusalem. And they begin the process of rededicating, dedicating. That's the meaning of Hanukkah. They liberate the temple and they rededicate it to the worship of God.

And it was then that they started calling it Hanukkah the festival of lights as it brought an end to such a dark time for God's people. And they celebrated Hanukkah, the festival of lights with the lighting of lamps in the temple and in every home.



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Now, the Jewish Talmud tells of a legend about the menorah. The the lamp stand. As a toad says that when the temple menorah was found and rededicated and returned to its place that they only found enough of that special oil that was used for the menorah. They only had enough oil to last for one night. And the process of making more oil would take a week. But as they rededicated the temple, they wanted to light up menorah even if they had just enough oil for one night. But what happened is what so often happens with God is the menorah kept right on burning until the end of the eighth night when new oil was ready.

Hanukkah is about dedication. It started when the Maccabees rededicated themselves to God and to his word, it led to the rededication of the temple at the end of the battle. Hanukkah is all about rededicating lives to God, to his worship, to his service. And I say this because as Christians, each one of us is a temple of the Holy Spirit. And if your Christian life is anything like mine, sometimes we are defiled as God's temples, not by an anti epiphanies, but we are defiled by a pagan secular post Christian culture. And we go along to get along, we knuckle under the culture.

Lord take our lives and let them be dedicated to you. Take our moments and our days, let them flow in, ceaseless praise, take our hands and let them move at the impulse of your love, take our lips and let them be filled with messages from you. Take our silver and our gold, not a cent would we withhold, take our minds and use every power as you choose. Here we are. Lord, all of us take our lives. We dedicate them to you.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thank you for listening. Until next time.