

# Hanukkah - Chanukah

How Jesus Fulfilled Both the 3 Years & the 8 Days

**Daniel 8:8-14; Matthew 24:1-22; John 10:22-30**

Target Truth Ministries.com Pastor Gerry Box 1299, Ukiah, Ca. 95482 707-463-2092

Today, we're going to talk about: 1) The holiday that Jesus celebrated at this time of year—Hanukkah; 2) The prophesy that Jesus gave; and 3) The History of Hanukkah, and how Jesus actually fulfilled it. Unlike our American holidays which only last one day, and then it is back to work, many of the Jewish holidays last for several days. Hanukkah lasts for eight days. Hanukkah is one of the most widely celebrated of the Jewish holidays, and the most historically documented, and, it is the only major Jewish festival not mentioned in the Hebrew Bible – the Old Testament. Hanukkah is not mentioned in the Old Testament because, the events which made this date a holiday, occurred after the time period of the Old Testament, which ended around 400 years before Christ. These events of Hanukkah occurred between the years of 167 B.C., and 164 B.C. (some say 169 B.C.-166 B.C.) – three years – with the temple being *fully* restored two years later in 164 B.C.. Of course, as we will discover, this holiday **IS** mentioned in the New Testament of the Bible, and it is celebrated by Jesus Himself, and I believe Jesus used this holiday to cause us to reflect on the future events He warned us about.

Hanukkah occurs at this time, in the winter, just like Christmas. However, Hanukkah occurs on the 25<sup>th</sup> of the Hebrew month of Kislev (Chislev), not December. The original Jewish calendar used 30 day months, and 360 day years, so every now and then, they throw in an extra month to keep up with the Roman calendar. Sometimes Hanukkah coincides with our 25<sup>th</sup> of December – but, usually it doesn't. Hanukkah, for the Jewish people, always has been a holiday of giving. The Hebrew people usually gave money. But, with the Christian holiday of Christmas occurring at almost the same time each year as Hanukkah, gift-giving has become a very important part of this holiday for the Jewish people, just as giving gifts is for Christians.

The story behind Hanukkah goes back to that period of time, just after Greece controlled the world-- back about 200 years before Jesus was born. After Alexander the Great died, the Empire of Greece, with its capitol in Babylon, was split up into four sections. As the years went by, the Roman part, in Italy, was becoming the more powerful. The section which had the old capitol of Babylon (the Syrian part of the empire), came under the control of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, around 175 B.C. Each of these four sections of the old Greek Empire were always trying to acquire each other's lands...and, to quote from an article; "*Antiochus had steered clear of interfering in the Jewish religion. But, his attitude changed abruptly in 168 B.C., after Rome ordered him to abandon his Egyptian conquests, or risk war with Rome. Antiochus marched home (I can just imagine him marching home after being scolded by Rome – grumbling all the way). There, he began to prepare for war with Rome. He believed his one chance of victory lay in uniting both the cultures, and religions, of his kingdom. That culture, that religion, he determined, would be, of course, Greek. The following year, the king sent one of his generals to occupy Jerusalem. Shortly thereafter, a commissioner arrived with a royal order abolishing the Jewish religion. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month (the birthday of Antiochus – also the traditional birthdate of the sun god, and Nimrod – Gen. 10), in 167 B.C., a Greek altar was placed atop the Jewish altar in the Temple, and the pagan priests began sacrificing pigs in the temple. This was called by the Jewish people "The abomination of desolation." The temple of Jehovah had become the temple of Zeus Olympus. In every Jewish city and town, Antiochus' soldiers erected altars.*

*In the village of Modin, a few miles east of Jerusalem, Mattathias, the elderly patriarch of the priestly Hasmonaean clan of the Jewish people, rose to challenge the Greeks. With his five sons, he attacked and killed the Syrian troops who had come to enforce the king's command, and they destroyed the Greek idols, and their altars in Modin. Mattathias died a year later, so his son Judas, nicknamed Maccabeus (the Hammer), took up the cause, and waged a guerrilla war against Antiochus' garrisons. Antiochus dispatched 6,000 men to quell the rebellion. They were destroyed by Judas (the Hammer), and his followers at Bet Tzur in Israel. Buoyed by their victory, Judas and his army swept toward Jerusalem. In December 164 B.C., on the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month, exactly three years after the temple had been desecrated, the temple was liberated, the sanctuary cleared of idols, and the altar set up to God. Judas, and his followers, prepared to resume the holy sacrifices in the*

temple, a central part of which consisted of kindling the brilliant lights of the lampstand (the Candlestick), in the temple. But, the patriots could find only one small cruse (vile) of the pure, sacred olive oil used to sustain the lamp – only a one day supply. To prepare more oil would take more than a week. Undaunted, the Maccabees lit the candlestick lamps and rededicated the temple. And, miraculously, as if a confirmation of the power of their faith, the oil did not burn out. The flames shone brightly for eight full days (we could use some of this stuff to put in our cars – think of it, eight times the mileage – 180 miles per gallon). That following year, the festival of Hanukkah was proclaimed, as a perpetual commemoration of Judas' victory over religious persecution.

*The temple candlestick had seven lights. The Menorah candlestick, used to celebrate this Hanukkah event, has places for eight lights, one for each day the temple candlestick stayed lit, and the Menorah for Hanukkah also has a ninth candle in the middle to glorify God. Since 1948, and the founding of the state of Israel, celebrations have once again returned to Modin (the Maccabees' hometown), and today, at Hanukkah, torches of freedom are carried by runners from there, to all parts of Israel."*

Hundreds of years earlier, **Daniel** in Chapter **8:8-14** (and also in **Daniel 9:27**), warned of the abomination of the temple – of the temple being desecrated. And the temple was desecrated, with false worship, and the sacrifice of pigs by the Syrian king. So, Daniel's prophecy appeared to be fulfilled. But, Daniel also pointed to 2,300 days for the end-times prophecy to be fulfilled--verse 14 (2300 days equal to a little more than 6 years). And we know from history that this event, in 164 B.C., only took 3 years, or 1,080 days. So, it would seem that Daniel's prophecy of the 2,300 days (which will be a similar event to this one of 164 B.C.), will occur at a time still in the future, and relative to the time of the end.

200 years after this abomination of the Holy of Holies, Jesus, in **Matthew 24:1-22**, gives a prophecy of the temple being destroyed, and also another prophecy of the abomination spoken of by Daniel, both being in the future, sometime. Some, over the years, have speculated that when the temple was destroyed by Rome, in 70 A.D. (40 years after Jesus had risen from death and gone into His kingdom of heaven), that both of these prophecies were fulfilled. And, one was. The prophecy of Jesus that the temple would be destroyed was fulfilled, but *not* the prophecy of Daniel and the abomination of the Holy of Holies. These are two different prophecies, both mentioned by Jesus in **Matthew 24**. In 70 A.D., when the prophecy of the temple being destroyed was fulfilled, there was no opportunity for the Romans to install false worship of any kind inside the temple, or to perform sacrifices. The temple was accidentally set on fire when the Roman army was burning the rest of the city, and the interior of the temple (which was wood, overlaid with gold), burned, thus melting the gold and silver. The soldiers were ordered to take the temple apart, stone by stone, to recover the gold and silver. So, just as Jesus had predicted, not one stone was left standing. All of this was documented by the historian Josephus.

So, it would seem that, even though the abomination of the temple took place in 167 B.C., and exactly three years later, to the very day (on the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month), it was cleansed, seemingly fulfilling the prophecy of Daniel, that this was not the only time this would happen. Jesus told us in **Matthew 24**, that it would happen again, sometime in the future. Additionally, it appears that this destruction of the temple in 70 A.D., did not completely fit the prophecy of Daniel either. Jesus, in **Matthew 24** stated that there would be many false Christs, and that Israel would suffer wars with many nations, before the abomination. But, history does not record these things happening between Jesus' resurrection and the destruction of the temple, in 70 A.D. In fact, only Rome attacked Jerusalem. In 70 A.D., the Holy of Holies was accidentally destroyed by fire (not defiled), and there was no abomination of the Holy of Holies (no false worship or sacrifice set up), and again, it was not a period of 2,300 days (**Dan. 8:14**). Jesus is telling us that this prophecy of Daniel (concerning the abomination), is still, yet, in the future, and so it must be for the time of the end, as the end-times were the context of that part of **Matthew 24**. The events of 70 A.D. do not adequately fit the prophecy of Daniel's 2,300 days, or the context of the end-time prophecies of Jesus in **Matthew 24**.

Today, the Holy Temple of God exists...not any physical building, but the body of believers (**Eph. 2:19-22**).

And, the Christian church is to be desecrated toward the end...the Abomination of Desolation. And, today, we are witnessing that exact abomination again – compromising God’s Word...disrespecting the Bible. As the Christian people embrace popular positions which oppose God’s teachings, the church is desecrated and will soon result in the end-times (see book **Revelation, Apostasy, End-Times & This Generation – Target Truth Ministries.com**).

Well, let’s leave all this history for a while, and let’s ask, where is there a reference to Jesus ever celebrating this holiday of Hanukkah in the Bible? If we look in **John 10:22-23**, we find that Jesus was present at the Feast of Dedication--which is Hanukkah. Hanukkah is known by two other names in Israel. The Feast of Dedication, and the Festival of Lights. Note that in verse 22, that this feast takes place in the winter (actually on the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month), the anniversary of both, the abomination, and also, the cleansing of the temple, exactly, to the very day, three years later.

So, Jesus celebrated this festival of Hanukkah, and Jesus did something else in His ministry, which turns out to be very peculiar. Let us go back to His early ministry, back to when He first began His ministry, and to one of the first things He did. You’ll probably recognize this event. But, we usually think of this event in His *last* week of life on this planet, when He came to Jerusalem for that *final* Passover week, when He was killed. In **John 2:1**, here we find Jesus’ very first miracle, at a wedding, and then, the next thing we find, is Jesus going to the Passover – the very *first* Passover of His ministry. In **John 2:13-16**, we find Jesus, just days before the Passover, commanding the commercial world to get out of the temple – the house of worship. They were defiling the house of God, and placing emphasis on money and trade, and not on God. Jesus commanded that they remove all these practices from the temple, and restore the temple to a house of worship. Jesus took a whip, and threw over their tables - their places of commerce - warned them...and then left. Jesus, God in the flesh, had proclaimed the temple defiled.

I used to wonder why, here in John, we see Jesus attacking the sellers of animals for sacrifice, and the money changers, as one of the *first* events in His three year ministry, when the other gospels talk of a similar event – attacking the sellers of animals, and the money changers, as one of the *last* acts of His ministry.

But, now we know (that after attacking the money changers in the temple), for the next three years, Jesus traveled around to various places, performing miracles, raising people from the dead, and instructing his followers of how He was to be put to death, and rise again to life after three days. His followers didn’t really understand exactly what He was talking about, but they recognized His love, His power, and His desire for all people, great and small, to be saved, so they stayed with Him, and learned. Then, three years later, Jesus entered Jerusalem, just before Passover again, and His first act is recorded in **Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-18; and Luke 19:45-48**. He overthrew the money changers, repeating exactly what He had done, *exactly three years before*, at the start of His ministry. He had instructed and warned them before, and now He was going to cleanse the temple. During this week of Passover, Jesus would die for us all – – paying the price for my sins, and the sins of all those who will trust in Him, so that anyone who trusts in Him will be with Him in His kingdom. In **Matthew 27:50-51**, at the exact moment of His death, we read that the temple curtain, the curtain that separated the Holy of Holies (the most sacred place), from the rest of the world -- that at the exact moment of Jesus’ death, this curtain was ripped in two – and that the world’s access to God was no longer separated, and that anyone who trusts in Jesus can now enjoy peace of mind in this life, as well as enjoying eternal life with God in His kingdom. The temple was cleansed, and God had established His plan of salvation for all time.

Jesus, had fulfilled exactly what Israel had been celebrating for years - Hanukkah. Jesus, on the third anniversary of warning the nation to stop defiling the temple, had cleansed the temple, complementing what the Maccabeus had done before. It was exactly three years to the day of the temple being defiled by the Greek leader, that the Jewish people had taken control of the temple back, and re-established worship in the temple - lighting the candlestick to restore light to the temple. And, here, in Matthew, we see that Jesus (exactly three years after warning the temple money changers that they were defiling the temple), taking the control of the temple away from the priests and money changers, causing the curtain to be ripped apart, so that no longer

should God's house of worship be used for peoples' personal gain and ambitions. Jesus cleansed the temple, and became our High Priest (**Heb. 9-10**), exactly duplicating the reason for Hanukkah.

This event of Christ cleansing the temple, while it is a similar event to that of Daniel's prophecy of the defiling of the Holy of Holies, and while it is an exact fulfillment of Hanukkah, and the 1080 days, or three years, it is not an exact replay of the 2,300 days described by Daniel (**Dan. 8:14**), and also foretold by Jesus Himself, in **Matthew 24:15**. The abomination of the last days will involve someone defiling the Holy of Holies, and setting up a false God to worship, and then, sacrificing to this false God over a period of 2,300 days—a little over 6 years. When this happens in the future, then, once again, Christ will return to cleanse the temple. So, there is yet, still another cleansing to take place, sometime during the 2,300 days of Daniel's prophecy (**Dan. 8:14**). Keep in mind that Jesus said the days would be cut short (**Matt. 24:21-24**). (See also messages 2068, 2 Witnesses, and Third Temple and the 4<sup>th</sup> at [Target Truth Ministries.com](http://TargetTruthMinistries.com))

But wait – there is more (as they used to say in the old Ginzu knife commercial). It doesn't end here. Jesus fulfilled even more of this holiday that the Jewish people call Hanukkah. The Maccabees lit the candlestick with only a one day's supply of oil, and it stayed lit for eight full days, giving them enough time to prepare more of the sacred oil. That is the miracle of Hanukkah. The reason it took so long to prepare the sacred oil, is because only the very first drop of the pressed olive was used for the sacred oil – so it took a lot of time to press all those drops to fill the daily oil needs. In **John 1:1-5**, we read that the Light of the world is this baby, come into this world – Jesus. Jesus Himself said in **John 8:12**, that He is the Light of the world, and He came to give us the Light of life. In **John 12:46**, Jesus said that He came to bring light, so that we would no longer be in darkness. In **Luke 2:25-32**, we are told that when Jesus was presented, right after His birth, at the temple, He was recognized as the Light to the Gentiles, as well as Israel – the Light of the whole world -- truth, wisdom, and peace of mind.

Hanukkah celebrates the light remaining lit for eight days. That is the miracle of Hanukkah – the eight days the light remained lit, and did not go out. Jesus came into Jerusalem on that Passover week when He would die, and was recognized as the Light of the world. We read, in **Matthew 21:1-11**, that the people welcomed Him with “Hosannas” (meaning, “salvation is at hand”). Many, perhaps, didn't recognize Him as God in the flesh, but they did recognize that He was a great leader, a great teacher, a great prophet, a great light, and Jesus entered Jerusalem as a King, sitting on a donkey, fulfilling another prophecy of **Zechariah 9:9**. Jesus was seen as a great light on *day one* (His first day in Jerusalem, during this Passover week), and the people spread their coats on the ground where He rode, and waved palm branches in the air, to welcome Him into Jerusalem. Jesus' *first act* when He entered Jerusalem was to turn over the tables of the sellers of animals, and the money changers – to cleanse the temple from being defiled. Jesus, the Light of the world, shone brightly on day one as He cleansed the temple. Did the light go out over the next several days? The flesh body of Jesus was put to death, just as one day, my flesh body, and your flesh body will die. But, our God did not die. Jesus bodily rose from death, on that day we call Easter, and His Light shined even greater – the greatest of miracles. And that day, Sunday - Easter, was exactly the **eighth day** after Jesus turned over the money changers, cleansing the temple, on that first day He entered Jerusalem as a fresh light of hope. *Eight days exactly*, again, fulfilling for all time, the miracle of Hanukkah. The number “eight” to the Jewish people is symbolic of eternity--a new beginning. And, Jesus, rising on the eighth day, points to the eternal, uncreated God (**John 1:1-3, 14**), giving us a new beginning. What is even greater than the miracle of Hanukkah, is that our Lord and Savior is still the Light of the world today. His light never goes out. He is alive right now. And we can each be part of His kingdom of Light, by trusting in Jesus. Only by trusting in Jesus will any of us enjoy His kingdom. Jesus tells us, in **John 14:6**, that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and that NO ONE comes to the Father's kingdom, except through trusting in Jesus. Jesus proved His power over death. Jesus revealed Himself to hundreds of people, over several weeks, on many occasions, after He had risen from death, to prove His power over death (**1 Corin. 15:1-8; Acts 1:1-8**). No one else has ever shown that kind of power over death. Only God has that power – **John 10:30**. I believe God's purpose in fulfilling Hanukkah in this way, is to enable Israel to recognize their Messiah Jesus in the coming end times (**Rom 11:25**). I believe God will use this fulfillment by Jesus so that Israel will recognize Jesus as their Messiah.

Jesus left us with instructions, and encouragement. In **John 12:27-36**, Jesus tells us to remain in the Light (His Word is for us, today), and if we remain in His Word, He tells us that we will become Sons of Light – meaning that by God’s power (not ours), the Holy Spirit will provide us with faith, and understanding, and that those who receive that faith, and understanding (those who trust in Jesus), will be part of His kingdom here on earth. We will be as lights to the world, sharing Jesus with others. And, also, that those who trust in Jesus will live for all eternally in His kingdom.

The miracle goes on. The miracle is with us today. And, long after this body of mine is gone, long after this planet earth is gone, long after that sun, which brings us light and keeps us warm – long after it has burned out, and no longer shines, God tells us in **Revelation 21:1-2, and 10, and 22-25**, that long after the sun and moon are dead, that Jesus, the Lamb, that He will be our light – and there will be NO night there.

That is a description of a perfect world – NO night shift (I worked night shifts for 8 years, and I never did get used to pulling the graveyard shift).

We, as Christians, however, must be concerned with those who don’t yet know Jesus. We, as Christians, must share God’s Word with those who don’t yet trust in Jesus, because the destiny of those who do not trust in Christ, according to Jesus, is just the opposite of light--it is outer darkness (**Matt 8:11-12, and 22:11-14**). Jesus tells us that, even though many will want to be part of the kingdom of God, even though many will want to go to heaven, there will still be those who don’t trust in Jesus who will be sent away into darkness -- separated, alone, isolated, forever – eternally (**Matt. 7:21-23**).

The miracle of Hanukkah for the Jewish people, is also a day that we, as Christians, should remember. Primarily, because Jesus Himself celebrated this holiday of Hanukkah, and also because Jesus Himself fulfilled *exactly, to the very day*, the three years of cleansing the temple when the curtain to the Holy of Holies was ripped in two, signifying the restoration of worship of God to all who will love Him...and also the eight days of the miracle of the light shining, by Jesus rising bodily from death on the eighth day, after cleansing the temple on the first day--The Light still alive. Of course, Jesus is perfect, and His light never goes out, and He is bringing His light to millions, right now.

Let’s read **Matthew 5:14-16**.

When we, as Christians, hear the word “Hanukkah,” may we forever remember that this is a day which Jesus celebrated (and fulfilled), encouraging us to look for His return. And, until His return, we, as Christians, are to “brightly shine.”

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