

Hanukkah and Purim

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The Feast of Hanukkah

The Christian world at large does not give much attention to the celebration of the Feast of Hanukkah. Some have said that we are “adding” to the Word of God by celebrating it. When you study the life of Jesus, He rebuked the Pharisees for man-made teachings that negated the Word of God. There were two cups at the Passover Jesus celebrated in the gospels. There is not a command to have any cups at the Passover meal in Exodus 12. Jesus did not rebuke them for having these cups, but simply explained their meaning.

He actually kept the feast of Hanukkah in John 10:22-39. This means that this feast has special significance for every believer! While Hanukkah is not listed as a Feast Day in Leviticus 23, it represents the fulfillment of prophetic events discussed in the Bible! It also foreshadows future events that have yet to happen!

In Daniel chapter 11, God explains in great detail the events leading up to the event commemorated by Hanukkah. I will not cover this chapter in detail because there has been much historical information written concerning it, but I will give a brief synopsis. In Daniel 11:3, God told Daniel that a mighty king would come to power in Greece. After this mighty king’s death, his empire would be parceled up into four different kingdoms. The mighty king who rose to power in Greece was Alexander the Great. After his death in 323 B.C., His kingdom was divided into four parts: one in modern-day Greece (East), another in modern day central and northern Turkey and Bulgaria (West), another in Egypt (South), and finally one stretching from Southern Turkey to modern day Iran (North).

After the Kingdoms were divided up, The Kingdom of the South and the Kingdom of the North were allied to one another for a period of time, but their alliance eventually degenerated into bloodshed. The two kingdoms fought against each other off and on for the next one hundred years. The one in the north was known as the Seleucid Empire. It was located in modern day

Syria. The one in the south was known as the Ptolemaic empire, and it was based out of Egypt. Between these two empires is the Promised Land and Jerusalem. The events that occurred between these two kingdoms are recorded in Daniel 11. The conflicts between the northern and southern kingdoms create the environment for the events commemorated during the Hanukkah season. Keep in mind that Daniel prophesied in the 6th century BC (approximately 600 to 530 BC). He foretold these events long before they actually happened!

In Daniel 11:21, we are informed that the Kingdom of the North would eventually be ruled by, "...a contemptible person who has not been given the honor of royalty. He will invade the kingdom when its people feel secure, and he will seize it through intrigue..." This King of the North was Antiochus IV, who seized the throne of the Kingdom while its rightful heir, Seleucus was still very young. Antiochus gained power through flattery and trickery. This happened about 175 BC.

During the reign of Antiochus, the land of Israel was brought under the rule of the Seleucid Empire. In 169 B.C., Antiochus and his forces came through Jerusalem on their way back from fighting in Egypt, and they desecrated the temple of God. The next year (168 BC), Antiochus attempted to conquer Egypt once again, but he was turned back by the Romans. Frustrated, Antiochus marched toward the land of Israel to unleash his rage from another failed invasion of Egypt.

While en route to their homeland, the Greek-Syrians passed through the land of Israel and stopped at Jerusalem. They first approached the city with peaceful intentions. Once they entered the city, Antiochus and his forces pillaged it. Antiochus then desecrated the holy things of God as prophesied in Daniel 11:29-32. He ordered a pig to be sacrificed on the altar in the outer court of the Temple. Moreover, he erected a statue of Zeus with his own likeness in God's Temple. He elevated himself to the place of God and demanded that the Jewish people bow down to his statue. He even changed his name to Antiochus Ephiphanes, with Ephiphanes meaning "God manifest." These events are called the

Abomination which makes desolate (Daniel 11:31). God also prophesied the rule of this wicked man in Daniel 8.

During his reign over the Jews, Antiochus outlawed Sabbath observance, reading of the Hebrew Scriptures, circumcision, and all Torah-observance (profaning God's holy covenant). He even forced people to eat pork. Those caught with the Holy Scriptures or performing circumcision were executed.

After taking this persecution for some time, the Jewish people finally rebelled against this tyrant. The Jewish freedom fighters were led by Mattathias and later his son, Judas Maccabeus. Although greatly outnumbered by as much as fifteen to one (15 to 1) they routed the Greek-Syrian forces battle after battle until they completely drove them out. God was truly with them in this struggle against lawlessness and evil.

In 165 BC, Jerusalem had been successfully re-captured and the people of God began the purification of the Temple. The Jewish people removed the statue of Zeus from God's Temple, destroyed the old altar of sacrifice, and had a new altar built. They then began to rededicate the Temple.

When they were re-dedicating the temple, they only had enough oil to last for one day. Since they did not have enough time to make more oil for the menorah, they decided to light the menorah on faith. By the power of God, the menorah stayed lit during the entire eight days of re-dedication on only one days' supply of oil! This is why this feast is also called 'The Feast of Lights'. It is called the Feast of Dedication because this is the time of the year when the Israelites re-dedicated the Temple of God.

As for Antiochus, he died a year after being defeated by the Maccabees with a terrible illness. This happened just as God showed the prophet Daniel: "Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power" (Daniel 8:25). The amazing thing is that these events were prophesied hundreds of years before they actually happened!

For Christ to celebrate this day means that it has significance for us as well! We should celebrate it as well. Because of this miraculous eight-day event, Hanukkah became celebrated for eight days, beginning with the 25th of Kislev (the ninth month) and going through the 2nd of Tevet (the tenth month) on the Hebrew Calendar. These events actually foreshadow the future coming of the anti-Christ!

In Matthew 24:14-16, Jesus said, “So when you see standing in the Holy Place the ‘abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel - let the reader understand - then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains...” These events are going to repeat themselves! Remember that God declares the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10). Prophecy has a former and a latter fulfillment. The former fulfillment tells us how the later fulfillment will occur. Jesus’ words inform us that there is a future prophetic fulfillment that has yet to come!

In Daniel 9:24-27, we are told that there will be 70 weeks of years (or 70 separate 7 year periods). The last “week” of years or 7 year period will come in the end! Daniel 9:26b-27 reads, “...The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.”

The King of the North in ancient times ruled from the city of Antioch, which is in modern-day Turkey. The Roman general Pompei took over Antioch in 64 BC, thus moving the King of the North from Antioch to Rome. In Bible prophecy, when one nation takes over another, the center of power shifts from the conquered nation to the conquering nation. According to Daniel 7:7, 23-24, the Roman Empire was taken over by ten kings. History tells us that Ten Germanic Tribes took out the Roman Empire. Germany

has laid claim to the Holy Roman Empire for hundreds of years since.

The ruler referred to in this 70th week is the anti-Christ. Once the United States has been destroyed, this fierce king will stand up and confirm a covenant with many for one seven-year period. He will put himself forward as a protector of the Jewish people. It is interesting to note that within the past few years, the Jewish state we call Israel bought 5 U boats from the Germans. This covenant apparently will allow them to have sacrifices in the land, which will no doubt make the Muslim nations very angry.

A battle will ensue, which is described in Daniel 11:40-45. “At the time of the end the king of the South will engage him in battle, and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood. He will also invade the Beautiful Land. Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand. He will extend his power over many countries; Egypt will not escape. He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, with Cush and Put in submission. But reports from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many. He will pitch his royal tents between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.” The King of the South is a Muslim-led coalition of nations. They will launch an attack against the King of the North, who will be a revived Holy Roman Empire led by Germany. This ruler will storm out against the Muslim countries and overtake them quickly. He will invade Israel as well. Just as Antiochus, the Anti-Christ will enter Jerusalem appearing to offer peace. He then will turn on the Jewish people and violate the covenant of peace he made with them! This violation is described in Isaiah 33:7-8.

To learn more about the identity of the anti-Christ, order our book “What Comes Next” by Pastor Bill Shults. You can order it with the information in the back of this booklet.

He will then begin to wreak havoc on the holy land. The Apostle Paul also speaks of the coming of the anti-Christ in 2 Thessalonians 2. He calls him the man of lawlessness. This evil man, just like Antiochus, will stamp out all reading of the Word of God. He will ban Sabbath keeping, circumcision and obeying God's commandments.

In 2009, the German Constitutional court ruled that the nation's capital, Berlin, must not allow any shops or offices to be open on Sunday. The ruling enforces the terms of Article 139 from the Weimar Constitution of 1919, which forbids all business from being open on Sundays and holidays recognized by the state. They had been lax enforcing this law since World War 2, allowing shopping on 10 Sundays throughout the year. The Germans are becoming stricter on Sunday observance. It is only a matter of time before they begin to persecute those who worship on the Sabbath!

We must guard ourselves because Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10, that the anti-Christ will come with counterfeit miracles signs and wonders. God manifested the miracle of oil in the time of the Maccabees so that they could continue the work of God to re-dedicate the temple. The true miracles of God come when we are seeking to carry out the work of God. The false miracles of the anti-Christ or man of lawlessness come for those who refuse to love the truth of the Word of God (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11). According to Daniel 11:31b, 33-34, he is going to hunt down and kill those who obey the commandments of God. This is why he is called the man of lawlessness. He is going to use flattery to gain allies among those who call themselves Christians. Just as some of the priesthood in ancient times was deceived and seduced, there will be spiritual priests deceived. This is why Jesus started the Mount Olivet prophecy in Matthew 24 by saying, "Take heed that no man deceive you."

At the end of the seven years, the Russian army will march from the north towards Jerusalem and the Chinese will lead their troops

from the east. This will cause alarm for the anti-Christ, as described in Daniel 11:40-45 (above). They will march out to fight with the anti-Christ for world domination and destroy Jerusalem. At the public return of Christ, we will defeat the anti-Christ and the nations gathered at Jerusalem (Rev. 17:14). The natural born Israelites left alive at the return of the Lord will help us defeat them just as the Maccabees defeated Antiochus.

In Zechariah 9:13-14, the Lord also speaks about this event. “13 When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man. 14 And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord GOD shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south.” Though outnumbered, God will empower His people once again to bring about victory.

Hanukkah is truly a reminder of the Bible verse, “‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the Lord Almighty” (Zechariah 4:6). In the Kingdom, we will celebrate God’s power to overcome obstacles as manifested through these end-time events.

Hanukkah has another prophetic meaning that occurs in the distant future. The Hebrew ceremonial calendar in Leviticus 23 begins with Passover, which occurs in the first month (Nissan), and ends with the Last Great Day in the seventh month (Tishri). Passover is the time commemorating Christ’s sacrifice for mankind. The Last Great Day represents the known as the Great White Throne Judgment. The other feasts falling between these two feasts represent important events falling between them. Since it falls in the ninth through tenth months (25th of Kislev through 2nd of Tevet), this festival occurs after the Last Great Day. Therefore, if the Last Great Day represents the Great White Throne Judgment, then Hanukkah represents the **time immediately after it**.

After the Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation 20:11-15, God is going to purify the earth and the heavens with fire. This will pave the way for the New Heavens and the New Earth. In 2 Peter 3:10-13, the Apostle Peter describes it this way: “10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. 11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.” There are many days of the Lord in the Bible. The day of the Lord described in Peter refers to when God will renew the entire universe with fire. The Greek word translated as new in these verses is *kainos*. This word does not mean brand new; it means renewed. God is going to renew the Heavens and the Earth. God was planning for the New Heavens and the New Earth in the beginning!

Peter calls the New Heavens and the New Earth the home of righteousness. Revelation 21:1 reads, “Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth...” A further connection we can make between the Hanukkah and the New Heavens and the New Earth is the Greek word *kainos*. God is going to renew or rededicate the world. While *kainos* is the Greek Word used for our future home, it is also the same word used to describe the New Covenant. The Greek word for the Feast of Dedication in John 10 is *egkainia* and it literally means “in newness.” One of the root words is *kainos*! In the same way that this festival is literally named “in-newness”, Christ is going to make everything new. In speaking of the New Heavens and the New Earth, John records in Revelation 21:5, “He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’ ”

Just as the Temple in the time of the Maccabees was renewed and rededicated, God is going to renew and rededicate the world and

the heavens. It gives God greater glory to take something that is corrupted and make it usable for Holy purposes rather than just creating something brand new. The Jewish men destroyed the old altar of sacrifice and built a new one because of sin. Christ will destroy the old earth and the old heavens because of the sins of man and Satan.

The writer of Hebrews mentions those who have tasted of the powers of the age to come (Hebrews 6:5). The power of the Holy Spirit to heal people, resurrect the dead, and other miracles are manifestations of the powers of the New Heavens and the New Earth! When you are saved, you begin to participate in the New Heavens and New Earth now! He will renew our bodies through the resurrection, and He is going to renew the heavens and the earth. We are renewed through fiery trials. The world will undergo a transformation by fire as well. He has to remove the thousands of years of violence, bloodshed, idol worship, inscriptions and writings of evil. Those things will not be remembered anymore! Our past failures will never be remembered.

You see, the new age to come will be an expansion of the work we do during the 1,000 year reign of Christ. During the millennial reign of Christ, the world will be divided up into countries, states, counties, and other districts. Those of us who are believers now will rule over the various divisions of the world. In the New Heavens and New Earth, some will rule over planets, solar systems, and galaxies! The billions of galaxies in the Universe are for the many children of God that He will have ruling in them. The Kingdom of God is simply a picture and type of the New Heavens and the New Earth.

At that time, we will be able to speak into existence forests and other landscape features. This is similar to how we now speak a word in Jesus' name and see sickness disappear! The creative power to see people healed now is a picture and type of the age to come when we will be used by God to resurface planets! We will go to these planets and create the conditions for life there.

When we are faithful in little, we can be faithful in much. After being faithful over the earth during the Millennium, God will entrust us with the Universe. Presently, the entire world has been given over to decay (Romans 8:21). We are going to help bring freedom and renewal to the entire universe. God's way of love will be spread to the farthest galaxy in the solar system.

The world then will be a much different place. First of all, there will no longer be any sea. Revelation 21:1 reads, "'Then I saw 'a new heaven and a new earth,' for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.'" There are going to be so many people transformed into spirit beings as children of God that the sea will have to be removed to fit them all on earth. The Father is going to be ruling the Universe from planet earth. "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God" (Revelation 21:3). This is another reason why the earth must be purified with fire. The Father will not come down to an earth defiled by sin; it must be cleansed.

Just as one day's supply of oil lasted the entire eight days, one source of light will supply the entire universe with light. "There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 22:5). This new world is something we should look forward to. This current world is certainly not our home. The violence, sexual immorality, lawlessness, and hatred makes this world a pain to live in! We should long for this new home and speed its coming.

In the Kingdom of God, Hanukkah will be a celebration of God's plan to graft all nations into Israel. The Festival of Hanukkah is eight days long. It is a celebration of the culmination of the eight annual feast days. Each day of Hanukkah corresponds to each one of the eight annual feasts. In other words, each day will be celebrated as that feast contributed to the end result of the New Heav-

ens and New Earth (the final fulfillment of Hanukkah). It is interesting that Hanukkah is eight days just as Tabernacles. This festival will likely be a pilgrimage feast like Tabernacles. It took eight days to reconsecrate the temple in Solomon's day, and it took eight days to rededicate it in the day of the Maccabees. This makes the festivals connected.

Jesus kept this celebration in John 10:22-39, which means that Hanukkah has a special meaning to Him. It was also during this celebration that He said, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish: no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one" (John 10:27-30). The voice of God is best summarized by the written Word of God. By knowing Christ's voice, through His Word, we will not be lured away like a piper to the anti-Christ's voice. Hanukkah is a further reminder that God's people will overcome. We will celebrate all of these things with joy!

The Feast of Purim

The background for the celebration of Purim is found in the book of Esther. The interesting thing is that you cannot find God's name one time in this book of the Bible. Instead, we see God working behind the scenes to protect His people. One of the themes of Purim is the tremendous irony involved in God setting right the things which once went wrong.

The Jewish people were taken captive to the land of Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. They remained there for 70 years. While they were there, they were subject to the Babylonians and then the Persians.

The story of Purim starts with the King of the Persians, Xerxes, throwing a tremendous celebration for his princes and nobles. This party lasts about six months. At the end of this time, he had a seven-day celebration for all who live in the citadel of Susa. On the seventh day, he called forth his bride, Vashti, to display her beauty before the nobles. She refused to come, which embarrassed the king. After consulting with his officials, it was determined that she should be removed from her position as queen.

The king then searched his entire kingdom looking for a queen to take her place. Beautiful virgins from across the vast empire were brought to him. They were treated with special ointments and food, and each one was given an opportunity to please the king. One of these beautiful virgins was named Hadassah or Esther. She was a Benjaminite descended from Kish. Her uncle Mordecai advised her to keep her family and national identity a secret. She sought only to please the king, and she won his heart. Her uncle Mordecai even uncovered a plot by other men to kill king Xerxes.

In the meantime, a man by the name of Haman (who was an Agagite) was lifted up and exalted by King Xerxes. Despite this promotion by the King, Mordecai refused to bow down to him. This caused Haman to seek the destruction of not only Mordecai, but all the Jews throughout the entire kingdom! He cast the *pur*

(or lots) on the 13th day of the 1st month on the Hebrew Calendar. The lots determined the date that they would try to destroy the Jewish people. Haman even offered to pay for this destruction to happen! The King approved this destruction and sealed their fate. In his pride, Haman even had a gallows built to hang Mordecai when the opportunity was right.

Once news of this decree was made known, Mordecai pleaded with Esther to go before the king to ask for mercy. Normally, no one was allowed to go before the king without being summoned. You could be punished with death if you came to him on your own accord. If the king held out his golden scepter, then you would be spared. You could approach him. Esther and all the Jews in Susa fasted for three days and three nights. After this time had passed, she went before the king.

With humility, Esther went before the king. The king reached out his golden scepter and she was allowed to approach him. The king asked her what she wanted, but she refused to speak about it at that time. Instead, she suggested a banquet be held with the king and Haman in attendance. She would even prepare the banquet. At this banquet, she requested a second banquet.

In the meantime, Haman thought that he was in special favor with the queen because he was invited. He was enraged once again at Mordecai's refusal to honor him. In arrogance, he built a gallows to hang Mordecai.

The evening before the second banquet with Esther, the king could not sleep. He had the records of the kingdom brought in and read in his presence. In it, he found where Mordecai uncovered the plot to kill the king. He decided to reward Mordecai and made Haman honor him before the people!

Then came the second banquet. Haman thought he would be honored, but the opposite happened. Esther made her request to the king known. Esther revealed to Xerxes the plot of Haman to kill her people. She asked that they be spared. In doing so, she re-

vealed that she was Jewish. The king was enraged!

He ordered that Haman and his sons be hanged on the gallows he built for Mordecai's destruction. He then made a decree that the Jews were allowed to defend themselves against their enemies on the same date that Haman had planned to destroy them! The Jewish people took vengeance this day, but did not take plunder from their enemies.

The days of Purim became celebrated from that time forth as a day when the Lord's people took vengeance on their enemies. It was and is to be celebrated with festive foods and joy. Then Purim was commanded as a celebration for the people of Israel; on the 14th and 15th of Adar (the 12th month), Purim was to be celebrated. The decree went out twice.

There is tremendous irony in this story. As aforementioned, the gallows Haman built for Mordecai became the gallows Haman was hanged on! This shows us that when we build a gallows to hang others, it becomes the gallows we are hanged on! We must be careful not to seek the destruction of others. It will be our downfall.

There is something even deeper to be learned. Haman was a descendant from king Agag, who was an Amalekite. When you read I Samuel 15, the Lord told Saul to wipe out the Amalekites and not take any plunder. He wiped them out except Agag the king. He also took the best of the plunder. Jewish history says that Agag had a son with a woman during this process. This mistake allowed Haman to later be born. Haman was trying to take revenge on the Jewish people for trying to wipe out His people! To add another twist to the story, Mordecai was a descendant of Kish, who was Saul's father (I Samuel 9:1-2, Esther 2:5). King Agag's descendant was trying to wipe out the Jewish people. God turned the tables so that Saul's descendant took him out instead! On top of this, the Jewish people did not touch the plunder of their enemies. One of Saul's sins was that he took back animals and plunder when he was commanded not to do so. God's people

made things right by not plundering their enemies.

Consider that the lots were cast on the 13th day of the 1st month. This was the day before the Israelites start celebrating Passover. Passover starts the celebration of being free from Egypt. Satan tried to ruin their festival celebration with this awful decree! God placed Esther in a position of authority to protect His people from destruction.

Purim will be celebrated as a Feast Day in the Kingdom of God. The Jewish people commemorated Fast Days to remember bad events that had occurred in the nation's history. These have been bad days ever since; negative things have happened.

Esther 9:29-31

29 So Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail, along with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter concerning Purim. 30 And Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews in the 127 provinces of Xerxes' kingdom—words of goodwill and assurance— 31 to establish these days of Purim at their designated times, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had decreed for them, and as they had established for themselves and their descendants in regard to their times of fasting and lamentation.

These days of Purim were to be established in the same way as the Fast Days were established. In Zechariah 8:18-19, God said that the fast days will be celebrated as feast days in the Kingdom of God. If God is going to make Fast Days Feast Days in the Kingdom (discussed in the next chapter), how much more will He make festive times commanded Feast Days! This means Purim will be celebrated as a Feast Day in the Kingdom! This is a continual theme we see in the Kingdom – God turning a source of mourning and grieving into Joy and Praise of Him!

The story of Esther is rife with prophetic meaning, some of which will occur in the near future! During Purim, the Jewish people remember when their enemies in the past have tried to destroy them. Haman can be looked at as a picture and type of the anti-

Christ, who will try to wipe out God's people and destroy the holy covenant (Daniel 8:23-26, 11:31-35). He can also typify Satan the Devil, who has always opposed God's people. Haman had ten sons that were to follow after him. There are ten kings who elect the anti-Christ (Rev. 17:12-14). The anti-Christ and the ten kings that elect him will be destroyed at the Lord's return.

It is also interesting that the gallows for Haman was 50 cubits high. 50 is a number of perfect freedom best depicted by the Jubilee year (Leviticus 25:8-12). When the devil goes into the pit before the Kingdom, freedom will be proclaimed for the entire world!

Haman is also like Satan because he accuses us of sin and tries to condemn us to the Lake of Fire. The king was mad when he found out when Haman lied. He went into the Garden to decide Haman's fate. King Xerxes left his cup behind (Esther 7:7). Interestingly enough, King Jesus went into a Garden to wrestle Satan the devil and drink the cup of affliction. Esther revealed her identity at the right time so that Haman would be utterly guilty and without excuse or escape!

A final prophetic meaning of Purim is seen in the bride-elect Haddassah, named Esther. Like the story, all believers are preparing to be the Bride of Christ. However, only a certain group of believers will be elected to be the Bride. Those who are called, chosen, and faithful will ride back with Jesus at His return (Revelation 17:14). Many are called, few are chosen. How many will remain faithful?

Before a girl could go before the king, she had to complete 12 months of beauty treatments. She was treated for six months with oil and myrrh and another six with perfumes and cosmetics (Esther 2:12). These ointments would literally soak into her pores so that when she sweat these scents were released. The goal was to please the king.

Some women dressed and were treated in the way that they liked, hoping that the king would like it. Esther only did what Hegai, the head eunuch in charge of the women, suggested (Esther 2:15). She won the favor of everyone, even the King! Hegai's name is very similar to the Hebrew word for annual festival, *chag*. This shows us that the Feasts of the Lord in Leviticus 23 are how we get the special food we need to be the Bride. Food determines health; special food is special, spiritual health. The oils can refer to the anointing poured out on us to serve Him (see John 12:1-10). The wonderful fragrances represent our worship of Him. Our works become the cosmetics that adorn us spiritually (I Timothy 2:10). Our beauty to Him is based upon these things. How attractive are you to Him? As Jesus said, he wants us providing meat in due season (Matthew 24:45). The festivals are when this happens. We are to be preparing and helping others prepare to be the Bride.

When Esther was revealed, the attack on God's people was stilled! The release of her identity allowed the release of God's people from attack! In Revelation 16:14-16 and Zechariah 14:2-15, we learn that the nations of the world will march on Jerusalem to destroy it. In Revelation 19:6-8, the Bride will be revealed to the world just before the public return of Jesus, which occurs in verses 11-20. The identity of the Bride is released just before the enemy is defeated. The release of this chaste, pure bride brings the end of the wicked prostitute of Revelation 17. Just as Esther's identity was concealed until just the right time, so will the True Bride of Christ be concealed.

There is a meaning of Purim even beyond the revealing of the Bride in Revelation 19! To understand this, we must understand the prophetic flow of the Feast Days. Starting with the fall Feast days, the flow is as follows:

Trumpets – Public Return of the Lord
Atonement – Devil goes in the pit
Tabernacles – Kingdom Begins - 1,000 years
Last Great Day – Great White Throne Judgment
Hanukkah – New Heavens and the New Earth created

Purim – The final revealing of the Bride

Revelation 21:1-4 reads, “1 Then I saw ‘a new heaven and a new earth,’ for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

The final prophetic fulfillment of Hanukkah is found in verse 1 when the New Heavens and New Earth are revealed. The final fulfillment of Purim is when the New Jerusalem appears as a BRIDE adorned just as Esther appeared as a bride adorned. This is the full revelation of the Bride’s glory. The bride appears once in Revelation 19 to the whole world alive at that time; this last time is for the entire Universe. There was a first Eve; she is the last Eve just as Christ is the second or last Adam.

Purim is typically celebrated over two days. These two days represent the two times the Bride will be revealed. It is also interesting that Esther held two banquets. In the Kingdom, we will look back on the Bride being revealed to the world. We will celebrate how her revealed identity opened the way for the King of Kings to return back to rule and reign. We will also celebrate this day in anticipation of the full glory of the Bride to be revealed in the New Heavens and the New Earth.

Celebrating Hanukkah and Purim

In this chapter, we want to look at some practical ways to celebrate Hanukkah and Purim.

Hanukkah

Hanukkah is not a “Jewish Christmas”. There is no historical connection between the two celebrations, as Christmas is not in the Bible. To learn more about the origins of Christmas, download our free booklet “The Truth About Christmas and Easter”. Go to the Resources section of the website and look for Booklets 2.

Of course, it is always a great idea for ministries to host special conferences or services to remember this tremendous time of the year. After all, Jesus celebrated it!

A common celebration in the home is the lighting of a Hanukkah. A hanukkah is a nine-branch menorah. The menorah in the temple was a seven branch. The Jewish people use this special nine branch to remember the oil that lasted eight days. The middle branch in the nine-branch menorah is called the Shamash branch. It is the servant branch. This candle is used to light all the other candles during the eight days of Hanukkah.

During Hanukkah, some families get together and light the menorah each night. The first night, they light the Shamash branch and then 1 branch. The second night, they light the Shamash branch and 2 branches, and so forth. On the last night they light the Shamash and all 8 of the other branches. While the Hanukkah is lit, some families pray special blessings over each other. The nine branch menorah represents the nine Fruits of the Spirit and the nine Gifts of the Spirit! Amazing!

As you light the menorah each night, here are two blessings you can speak. I have them listed in both Hebrew and English.

1. *Ba-ruch A-tah Ado-nai Eh-lo-hei-noo Meh-lech Ha-olam A-sheh Ki-deh-sha-noo Beh-mitz-vo-tav Veh-tzi-va-noo Leh-had-lik Ner Cha-noo-kah.*

1. Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to kindle the Chanukah light.

2. *Ba-ruch A-tah Ado-nai Eh-lo-hei-nu Meh-lech Ha-olam Sheh-a-sa Nee-sim La-avo-tei-noo Ba-ya-mim Ha-hem Bee-z'man Ha-zeh.*

2. Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who performed miracles for our forefathers in those days, at this time.

Since eating is always involved with celebration, there are special foods you can make. Most of these foods are oily to remind us of the miracle of God's oil. Some people make latkes, which are potato pancakes. Others eat donuts or even fried chicken! Any type of oily food will suffice (assuming its clean of course!) Oil represents the Holy Spirit, so each up as much as you want!

When your Hanukkiah is lit, you can always read special Hanukkah-themed stories to your children. You can pray the Sabbath blessings over each other as well. There is a fun game called dreidel. A dreidel is a small top-like toy used to spin. It has four sides on it. Dreidels have four Hebrew letters on them, and they stand for the saying, *nes, gadol, haya, sham*, meaning "A great miracle occurred there". You can go to nearly any website about Hanukkah and find the exact rules for playing this game.

As far as personal readings are concerned, you can read the Books of Maccabees. They are not inspired by God, but they are historical books written to describe the events that occurred at that time. Daniel 8 and 11 describe the fulfillment of the prophetic events found in Hanukkah.

Kelly Vonner, an ordained prophet at Hungry Hearts, celebrates Hanukkah with her family. She has some great ideas that you might be able to draw from. Hanukkah is their family's "Art of Bravery" season. Here are some great ideas that she shared:

"During this season, we take the time to embrace the light, imitate the bravery, and praise God for the miracles that happened during Hanukkah.

While the majority of the world is placing reefs and Christmas trees up in their homes, our family will be creating and decorating our home with "Happy Hanukkah" signs and menorahs. Last year, we created a 3D snowflake and overlaid it with a menorah. The year before, we constructed menorahs from our children's hand silhouettes. We've also created menorahs from Popsicle sticks and Styrofoam balls. In addition, we use the Light My Fire Hanukkah App to digitally light menorahs and share on social media.

Our "Happy Hanukkah" signs are covered in Bible verses that reference light. As we progress through each night of Hanukkah, we try to add more verses about light, strength, and bravery. We embrace Jesus as the Light of the World, the Light in our home, and the Light of our life.

We have several children's books in our library as well: "Like a Maccabee" by Raymond Zwerin & Audrey Marcus, "The Maccabee on the Mantle" by Abra Garrett, "Elmo's Little Dreidel" by Sesame Street, "Biscuit's Hanukkah" by Alyssa Capucilli and Latke, "The Lucky Dog" by Ellen Fischer. Our sons use this season to imitate the bravery of the Maccabees by sharing their Hanukkah books with their teachers and classmates. One year my nephew took dreidels to school and taught his classmates how to play. I generally set a menorah on my desk; students immediately ask questions and want to know more about what I believe. During Hanukkah, when most people are focused on Christmas, our family stands up to be soldiers for Jesus."

The Lord has given me some special readings for the Hanukkah season that I would like to share. These would be great to read aloud after your Hanukkiyah is lit. There are three special themes as it relates to Hanukkah: 1) Light, 2) Miracles of God, and 3) Bravery in battle. The Lord showed me that the purpose of Hanukkah is to build your faith just before the winter spiritual warfare begins.

Day 1 – John 10:22-39, Luke 6:6-10, John 4:43-54, Matthew 8:5-13, Exodus 14:1-31

Day 2 – Genesis 1:1-3, Luke 7:11-17, Mark 4:35-41, Luke 8:26-39, Luke 22:50-52, Joshua 6:1-21

Day 3 – John 8:12, John 5:1-9, Mark 5:25-34, Luke 8:49-56, Judges 7-8:12

Day 4 – I John 1:5-7, Matthew 9:27-31, Matthew 9:32-34, John 6:1-14, Judges 15:9-14

Day 5 – I Peter 2:9, John 6:16-21, Matthew 14:34-36, Matthew 15:21-28, Matthew 20:29-34, 1 Chron. 11:10-25

Day 6 - Mark 10:27, Mark 7:31-37, Matthew 15:32-39, Mark 8:22-25, John 11:1-44, 2 Kings 6:8-23

Day 7 - Zechariah 4:6, John 9:1-7, Matthew 17:14-21, Luke 13:11-17, Zechariah 9:13, 2Chron 14 (KJV or NKJV)

Day 8 - Lev 24:1-4, Luke 14:1-6, Luke 17:11-19, Mark 10:46-52, 2 Kings 18-19:1-19, 35-36, Hebrews 11

Purim

Purim is a two-day celebration. In the Bible, they traded gifts with each other out of thankfulness that God spared their lives. “20 And Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all the Jews, near and far, who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, 21 to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar, 22 as the days on which the Jews had rest from their enemies, as the month which was turned from sorrow to joy for them, and from mourning to a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and joy, of sending presents to one another and gifts to the

poor.” (Esther 9:20-22) Some people give to the poor at this time, as they did in the book of Esther. Indeed, God has spared our lives when we didn’t deserve it. Because of His rich love for us and divine intervention, we are spared.

Song of Solomon is a great book of the Bible to read during these two days, as it portrays the Bride of Christ and the groom. You can also have a great time with your family reading the book of Esther. When the name Haman is mentioned, you can say “boo!” and cheer when the name Mordecai is read. This is a fun way to celebrate the festival. Additionally, you can have tambourines or another noise making instruments for people to cheer when their favorite part of the story is played out.

Another fun way to celebrate Purim is to have a costume party. You can have the children and adults dress as certain characters from the story. You can have all the girls dress as Esther and the boys dress as King Xerxes. Then you just need 1 or two adults to play Mordecai and Haman. This is a great way to teach this wonderful story to children. You can go even further and have a play based upon these events.

You can of course have special meals during this time. There are special pastries called “Haman’s Ears” that some Jewish people eat. You might look this recipe up on the internet or make a different pastry to commemorate this special time. You can always say the Shabbat blessings over your family each day, even though Purim is not an Annual Sabbath.

The Lord showed me a series of verses to be read during Purim with your family or by yourself. They are powerful and help us to focus our minds on being the bride of Christ.

Day 1: Psalm 45:7, Isaiah 61:1-3, John 12:1-7, John 14:1-3, 2 Corinthians 11:2, Ephesians 5:22-33, 2 Corinthians 2:14-16, Revelation 19:1-8, 11-21

Day 2: Isaiah 54:11-14, Isaiah 65:17-19, Isaiah 66:22-23, Hebrews 12:22-24, Revelation 3:7-13, Revelation 21:1-4, 9-27, Revelation 22:17

Sister Jill Shoop of Hungry Hearts has studied Purim for over a decade and has some great contributions to this topic! Because so many of the major celebrations in our culture center around anti-Biblical holidays (Halloween, Christmas, etc.), Purim offers a great opportunity to involved children and other family members in preparing for the celebration. This is a great way to witness to and involve those attending traditional or denominational churches, as they often have no idea about this great celebration!

Ideas for Expanding Tradition:

- A popular cookie named *hamantaschen* is often made with a variety of fruit fillings. The name is a Yiddish word meaning "Haman's pockets." It is also said that Haman wore a three-cornered hat, which may explain the triangular shape. These cookies can also be referred to as "oznay Haman," or "Haman's ears" after the old practice of cutting off criminals' ears before execution. Fillings might be fruit preserves, cream cheese or poppy seeds.
- Purchase clear glass goblet style glasses from a party center. There are even gold plastic goblets available at some party stores. Buy multi-colored plastic gems and allow family members to glue the decorations onto the glasses. Use a non-toxic, water-proof glue. This is in keeping with Esther 1:7.
- Create a special punch or drink that is especially festive. Our family loves to mix fresh-squeezed lemonade with grape juice. Add ginger ale for fizz, if desired.
- Get crowns from your local Burger King and spray paint them solid gold. Decorate and personalize with glue-on gems and glitter paint. Write the name and date of the person who decorated each crown and keep them from year to year to see how children's artwork changes.
- Search for great baskets year round at yard sales so you'll be ready to fill them with goodies to share with friends at Purim.

Chart #1: Feast Calendar for Hanukkah and Purim*

Year	Hanukkah#	Purim#
2015	Dec 7-14 (Mon-Mon)	March 5-6 (Thur-Fri)
2016	Dec 25-Jan 1(Sun-Sun)	March 24-25 (Thurs-Fri)
2017	Dec 13-20(Wed-Wed)	March 12-13 (Sun-Mon)
2018	Dec 3-10 (Mon-Mon)	March 1-2 (Thur-Fri)
2019	Dec 23-30 (Mon– Mon)	March 21-22 (Thur-Fri)
2020	Dec 11-18 (Fri-Fri)	March 10-11 (Tues-Wed)
2021	Nov 29-Dec 6 (Mon-Mon)	Feb 26-27 (Fri-Sat)
2022	Dec 19-26 (Mon-Mon)	March17-18 (Thur-Fri)

#Hanukkah and Purim are always observed on the night before. In fact, all of the Feasts begin at sunset of the previous day. For instance, the first day of Hanukkah in 2015 begins at sunset on Sunday, December 6th. It ends at sunset on Tuesday, December 14th.

*This calendar is derived from the Hebrew Calendar.

Meet the Author

Kelly McDonald Jr. is an ordained Evangelist at Hungry Hearts Ministries in Jackson, TN. For 21 years, Kelly attended Trinity Baptist Church in Bemis, TN, where he was saved in 1992. While at Trinity, a small independent Baptist church, Kelly learned boldness for the Kingdom of God and that being a Christian is an all or nothing experience. In June 2006, Kelly was called to his first ministry, going door to door in the Bemis community and inviting people to church. In September 2006, Kelly was called to begin a Christian men's group at his then college, Lambuth University. In February 2007, Kelly was called to preach. Less than a month later, he became introduced to Hungry Hearts Ministries.

Since becoming a member of Hungry Hearts, Kelly has taken on many roles to further the ministry's work, from going door-to-door to pass out booklets, preaching, administering the prison ministry, teaching Bible Studies, and starting churches. Due to his service in the ministry, he was ordained a Deacon during the Feast of Pentecost on May 31st, 2009. His spiritual growth and desire to serve God led to his ordination as an Evangelist during the Feast of Pentecost on May 25th, 2012.

Kelly has written for a local Christian magazine, *The Christian to Christian Connection*, the international Sabbatarian magazine, *The Sabbath Sentinel*, and the regional magazine, *The Good News*. He has written Partner Devotionals for Perry Stone. He currently writes for and serves as the Editor for the Ministry's magazine, *Pursuit*. Kelly has written 9 books and 21 booklets on various Bible topics. Kelly graduated *summa cum laude* from Lambuth University in Jackson, TN in 2009. He earned a Bachelor of Science with a double major in Political Science and Sociology with a minor in Legal Studies. Kelly has been preaching since 2007 and is available to speak at your church upon request.

There are two festivals not mentioned in Leviticus 23 that teach us tremendous truths about the Plan of God. They are Hanukkah and Purim. Jesus actually celebrated Hanukkah in John 10:22-39! This means it is a celebration that we should celebrate as well! Both Hanukkah and Purim are celebrations based upon Bible events that have already happened! They also foreshadow major prophetic events. Learn about these festivals and their importance in the lives of believers today!



Kelly McDonald, Jr. is an ordained Evangelist at Hungry Hearts Ministries in Jackson, TN. Kelly writes for the international Sabbatarian magazine, *The Sabbath Sentinel*. He also writes and serves as the Editor for the ministry's magazine, *Pursuit*. He has written 30 books/booklets on pursuing Jesus Christ. He has been preaching since 2007 and is available to speak at your church upon request.