

HANUKKAH AND THE INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD

Introduction

- 1) The Jewish holiday/feast of **Hanukkah** begins on the 25th day of Kislev, the ninth month on the Jewish calendar; this typically falls in December on the Gregorian calendar
- 2) Most have heard of this holiday, but may not understand its meaning and significance
- 3) Since this Jewish holiday is mentioned in the Bible, and the events behind its history were foretold in Bible prophecy, we should be more familiar with it (can be a discussion “starter”)
- 4) This study will also notice other significant events of the “Intertestamental Period”

I) Intertestamental Period

- A) The approx. 400 years between the close of OT revelation and beginning of NT events
 - 1) *Malachi* prophesied of the coming of John (the Baptizer) who would announce the coming of the Messiah and preach repentance (3:1; 4:5-6; fulfilled Matt. 11:10; Lk. 1:16-17)
 - 2) Also referred to as “*Between the Testaments*” or “*The Silent 400 Years*”
- B) This time period saw many significant events that have affected history to this day

II) The Feast of Hanukkah (Heb. Chanukah = “Dedication”)

- A) Based in the historical events involving the Jews of the 2nd century B.C.
 - 1) Greek Empire, led by *Alexander the Great*, conquered the Persian Empire (334 BC), but Alexander died at age 32 (323 BC) and the Greek Empire divided into four parts
 - 2) *Ptolemy* ruled in Egypt and *Seleucus* ruled in Syria; Palestine first came under the rule of the Ptolemies (320-198 BC), then of the Seleucids (198-64 BC)
 - 3) One Seleucid ruler was *Antiochus IV Epiphanes* (175-164 BC) – made life terrible for Jews
 - a) Outlawed Jewish rituals; ordered worship of Greek gods; seized/defiled Temple (168 BC)
 - b) Foretold in the prophecy of Daniel (8:5-12, 20-26; 11:21, 31-33)
 - 4) An aged priest, Mattathias, started a revolt and his son, Judas Maccabeus (“the hammer”) continued it as the Maccabean revolt – defeated Syrian army and marched to Jerusalem
 - a) Cleaned and repaired Temple, then held an eight-day “dedication” ceremony (165 BC)
 - b) Events of dedication recorded in the Jewish historical book of 1 Maccabees (4:36-59)
 - c) Became an annual feast observed by the Jews (*Feast of Dedication* – John 10:22-23)
- B) Observance of **Hanukkah** today
 - 1) One candle in a menorah (lampstand) is lit each night for eight nights (“Festival of Lights”)
 - a) Jewish *Talmud* claims miracle at the first dedication ceremony – menorah was lit with only one day’s oil, but lasted eight days until more oil could be produced
 - 2) Eat oily foods like *latkes* and *sufganiot*, play the game *dreidel*, give *gifts*, sing *songs*

III) Other Significant Events during the Intertestamental Period

- A) Use of the *synagogue* increases throughout the Jewish dispersion (Jn. 7:35; Diaspora)
- B) Tensions rise between Jews and *Samaritans* (Samaritan temple destroyed in 128 BC)
- C) Jewish sects – *Pharisees* (from Hasidim “pious ones”), *Sadducees*, *Zealots*, *Herodians*, *Essenes*
 - 1) Other groups – scribes, Sanhedrin, tax collectors (publicans)
- D) Literature – *Septuagint* (LXX; Greek translation of Hebrew Scriptures), *Apocrypha* (hidden, secret), *Pseudopigrapha* (writings under false names); *Dead Sea Scrolls* (OT manuscripts)
- E) Rise of *Roman Empire* (took over Palestine in 64 BC) and the *Herodian dynasty* (cf. Gal. 4:4)

Conclusion

While noting the historical events of past ages, we must follow only **Jesus** today, not the traditions and teachings of men that have passed away (Jn. 10:24-30). Jesus is our present and only divine **Light** of truth (Jn. 1:6-9; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35-36; 2 Cor. 4:6; Rev. 21:23; 22:5), and we are to be His people to obey His will. The physical temple has passed away, and Christ has dedicated His present **spiritual temple** made up of the sanctified souls of the faithful under the new covenant (1 Pet. 2:5; 1 Cor. 3:16). Obey Him today and walk in the light of the truth of God.