



Benefits of Celebrating Hanukkah

I. INITIAL HANUKKAH THOUGHTS

A. Purpose

1. Provide a **brief overview** of Hanukkah
2. Discuss the **themes** of Hanukkah
3. Give examples of why **all Believers are invited** to celebrate Hanukkah
4. Explain the **benefits** of celebrating this festival
5. Give practical examples of **how to take part** in this festival

B. Introduction to Hanukkah

1. *Personal Stories*: My past history with Hanukkah
2. *Relevant to Believers*: Hanukkah is relevant to us all as Believers (not just for the Jews)
3. *Next Festival on the Prophetic Clock*: The Bible indicates that there will be a playing out of the Hanukkah story once more
4. *Not a Holy Convocation*: God does not command us to observe it
5. *Yeshua Probably Celebrated Hanukkah*: While the Scripture doesn't allow us to be dogmatic, as a Jewish man, Yeshua probably participated in Hanukkah
 - a. Though not a Mosaic festival, Yeshua was recorded as being in Jerusalem for this festival in John 10:23; Yeshua used the Hanukkah festival season to provide the venue for the first public acknowledgement of His Messiahship and deity.

C. Our Posture

1. *Truth...& Revelation*: It's a matter of both
2. *Gracious Attitudes*: Let's foster having attitudes that are gracious and non-judgmental
3. *Not a Substitute for Christmas*: Though both festivals occur at the same time of year

D. Benefits to Hanukkah Observance

1. *Biblical Fulfillment*: It is the fulfillment of Daniel 11 & mentioned in John 10:23 & perhaps in Hebrews 11:32-39
2. *Israeli Identification*: It allows us to greater identify with the Israeli people
3. *Blesses Families/Congregations*: It allows a time for families and communities to gather around godly themes and the memories of godly people
4. *Remembers Godly Heroes*
5. *Instills Godly Themes*
6. *Readies Ourselves for a Future Hanukkah Story*
7. *Dress Rehearsals*: Our observance of the festivals are dress rehearsals of what is to come
¹⁶Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day-- ¹⁷things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Messiah. Colossians 2:16-17

E. Basic Hanukkah Themes

1. *Retelling the Story*
2. *Redemption*: Remembering Our Redemption: Yeshua as the servant candle and light of the world
 - a. This is the festival of lights and Yeshua claimed to be the ultimate Light: as the light of the world (John 8:12)
3. *Rededication*: Rededicating Our Temples: this festival commemorates saying yes to God and no to assimilation with the world
 - a. Hanukkah means "dedication" and commemorates the rededication of God's Temple; we as Believers are also referred to collectively as the temple of God and need consistent rededication too
4. *The Miraculous*: Experiencing the Miraculous; One of the descriptors of Hanukkah was "a great miracle happened here"

- a. We also are called to follow God in doing the right thing and building an expectation that God will meet our small sincere efforts with His miraculous power.
5. Comforting the Oppressed: Identifying and standing with those who are suffering
6. Cultivating a Godly Legacy: One godly family turned the tide of a nation
7. Endurance in Tribulation: This story will play out again
 - a. Hanukkah is a reminder for us to attain endurance and to be faithful to the end
 - b. Hanukkah gives us examples of those who were faithful unto death under intense pressure
 - c. *As Believers, we will suffer*: “All who live godly in Yeshua will suffer persecution” 2 Timothy 3:12
 - d. “The disciples rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Yeshua’s sake” Acts 5:41
8. Shining Our Lights: We are called to be witnesses
 - a. Yeshua claimed in Matthew 5:14 that we as Believers are the light of the world. He was declaring that we are “on mission” and are called to be lights pointing to Him in this dark world.

II. THE PAST HANUKKAH STORY

A. Overview: “They tried to kill us, we won, let’s eat”

B. The Basic Story of Hanukkah

1. Oppression
 - In 168 BCE, the Jewish Temple was taken by Syrian-Greek soldiers. The emperor Antiochus dedicated the temple to Zeus, setting up a statue of Zeus in the temple and defiled the Temple further by sacrificing pigs on the altar.
 - Then in 167 BCE, Antiochus oppressed the Jewish people further by making the observance of Judaism illegal—forbidding them from observing their biblical practices and holy days under the threat of death. He also ordered all Jews to worship Greek gods.
2. Resistance

1 Maccabees 1:62 ⁶²*Yet there were many in Israel who stood firm and found the courage to refuse unclean food.*

 - Jewish resistance began in the village of Modin, near Jerusalem. Greek soldiers forcibly gathered the Jewish villagers and told a village leader to bow down to an idol and eat the flesh of a pig. Once the leaders acquiesced, the people were most likely to follow. A Greek officer ordered Mattathias, a priest and leader in the village, to comply to their demands, but he refused. When another villager stepped forward to cooperate on Mattathias' behalf, the priest became outraged. He drew his sword and killed the villager, then turned on the Greek officer and killed him too. His five sons and the other villagers then attacked the remaining soldiers, killing all of them. They fled to the hills and though vastly outnumbered they took action and started a guerrilla war against their foreign oppressors.
3. Triumph & Celebration
 - The small band eventually conquered the oppressors and came to Jerusalem with the intent of cleansing and rededicating the temple. Upon doing this, they had an 8 day celebration; which became known as Hannukah (or the Feast of Dedication) which was initially celebrated as a sort of delayed festival of tabernacles. On the 25th of Chislew (which became the first night of Hanukkah), they dedicated the altar and offered a sacrifice.

C. The Prophetic Backdrop

1. There are two specific places in Daniel where he receives revelation from YHWH pertaining to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes
 - a. Daniel 8:9-14 (23-26—seems to include a foreshadowing of the coming Anti-Messiah?)
 - b. Daniel 11:21-35
 - i. “Daniel 11 has enormous theological value. First, the reality of the God of the Bible is demonstrated. Campbell relates: “In the first 35 verses there are at least 135 prophecies which have been literally fulfilled and can be corroborated by a study of the history of the period.” Miller, Stephen B. (1994-08-31). *The New American Commentary Volume 18 - Daniel* (pp. 312-313). B&H Publishing.
 - ii. Daniel’s description of the military and political intrigue of the Greek empire is so accurate, that secular historians (who do not accept that prophecy exists) assume that the Book of Daniel must have been written five hundred years after the fact! Avner Boskey
 - iii. God disclosed this historical summary to the prophet to prepare the Jewish people for the coming crisis—Antiochus's persecution. Biblical revelations of the future are given by the Lord to his people to exhort faithfulness, to encourage during difficult days, and to comfort in suffering (Miller, 234).

Olsen’s *Benefits of Celebrating Hanukkah* (17-1209)

2. Affirms the Scripture's Supernatural Revelation: there is a God in heaven who reveals these matters. God is omniscient and omnipotent and has supreme knowledge and power over history.
 - a. God knows the future
 - b. God plans the future
 - c. God reveals the future

3. Gives Believers Confidence for the Future: since the previous prophecies have been fulfilled, the subsequent promises of deliverance and triumph will just as assuredly come true.
 - a. When we know the future, Believers stand firm
 - b. Believers will do exploits
 - i. Judas Maccabeus would (most likely) have been familiar with Daniel and it would have inspired him to godly action
 - c. Believers will bring understanding

³³ *Those of the people who understand shall instruct many... they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering....³⁵ Some of those of understanding shall fall (martyrdom), to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time. (Dan. 11:33-35)*

- d. Believers will endure suffering: God's honest as He speaks of the future
- e. Believers will be refined: suffering (if not wasted) can produce great fruit in God's people
- f. Believers will find rest and will ultimately be victorious; God has marked this final day

D. Bibliography: 1 Maccabees 1-4 provides a more detailed description of the Hanukkah story

E. Yeshua Fulfills this Festival

1. Yeshua's Conception: Yeshua was most likely conceived at this festival and was born nine months later at the feast of Tabernacles
2. The Light of the World: This is the festival of lights & Yeshua claimed to be the light of the world
John 8:12 ¹²Then Yeshua again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."
3. Future Replay of the Story: Yeshua will return as conqueror to culminate another playing out of the Hanukkah story. Yeshua stated that the story of Hanukkah will happen again (Mark 13:13-16; Matthew 24:15-18). He will destroy a second and more powerful "Antiochus" (the Antichrist) at His return (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

III. A PRESENT REMEMBERING & CELEBRATION

A. Enter In (Just Do It): We will never walk out these festivals perfectly, but we can start observing them and improve by doing a little more each year.

1. We can make the Jewish people jealous by our coming to salvation (and by extrapolation) walking out those things (including the festivals) that God has given to His covenant people.

I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. Romans 11:11

B. Practical Suggestions (for those starting out):

1. Get (or make your own) hanukkiah and buy enough candles to light your hanukkiah each night of Hanukkah
2. Ask God what Hanukkah traditions you can establish
3. Procure resources that will help you understand Hanukkah more fully and be able to enter in to the celebration
4. Buy special crafts, decorations, and music to commemorate the season
5. Focus on the spiritual themes of the time and ask God for greater revelation of these truths

C. Celebrate: Party & celebrate with others

IV. A FUTURE HANUKKAH STORY

A. Prophetic Factors

1. Non-linear Prophecies: these prophecies are intermixed throughout the Scriptures
 - a. Chiastic Structures: they are largely foreign to a western understanding
2. Double Fulfillments: abomination that causes desolation; Yeshua's words
3. "Telescoping"
 - a. Yeshua's Reference to Himself in Isaiah (Luke 4:16-30); Daniel 7
4. Takes Diligence: Studying these things takes a diligent searching out
 - a. Observing the festivals provides a consistent, annual time to look at these prophecies: three times a year [Fall festivals, Hanukkah, Purim]

Olsen's *Benefits of Celebrating Hanukkah* (17-1209)

5. *Humble Attitude*: We're searching out future things. In light of this, it is important to maintain a humility and teachability as we prayerfully study these things.
6. *In the Bible for a Reason*: God put these things in the Scripture because He felt like they would be important for us to know.

B. Yeshua's "Future" Prophetic References to Daniel

1. Abomination that Causes Desolation (Matthew 24:15): Yeshua describes it as a coming event
2. Tribulation
3. "Coming on the Clouds"

C. The Anti-Messiah

1. A coming most wicked ruler that has many of the same characteristics as Antiochus
2. He will defile the temple in Jerusalem as well as wearing down the saints
3. The Greater Judah Maccabee (Yeshua the Messiah) will come to conquer the Anti-Messiah
4. There will be another cleansing and restoring of a future temple

D. The Abomination that Causes Desolation (taken from Mike Bickle's teaching notes)

1. Partial Previous Fulfillment (in Daniel 11:31)
2. Yeshua called His people "to see" the abomination of desolation, and then pointed us to the book of Daniel to grasp the main Old Testament idea behind it (Mt. 24:15). In the New Testament, our understanding is greatly expanded by what John (Rev. 13) and Paul taught (2 Thes. 2).

¹⁵"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), ¹⁶"then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains..." ²¹then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been..." (Mt. 24:15-21)

3. Yeshua made it clear that Daniel's "abomination of desolation" is the central event that helps us to understand His view of the end times. Yeshua only identified this one specific political event, which will let His people know that they are in the generation of His return and that the Great Tribulation has started. There are many implications associated with this key event.
4. In order for the Antichrist to put an image of himself in the temple in Jerusalem, Israel must be a nation, with Jerusalem under its jurisdiction, and the temple must be built on its original site (Solomon's temple), functioning with sacrifices according to the law of Moses.
 - a. One major obstacle to the temple being rebuilt is that Al-Aqsa Mosque (Islam's third most holy site) and the Dome of the Rock stand on the Temple Mount (original site of Solomon's temple). Someone must bring peace to the Middle East before this can happen.
 - b. The abomination of desolation is the single key event that Yeshua highlighted to help us understand many other events that will be connected to this terrible abomination.
5. The abomination of desolation is referred to eight times in the Scripture. Daniel used a form of this phrase four times (8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11), two passages quote Yeshua's use of the phrase (Mt. 24:15; Mk. 13:14), and it is described by Paul (2 Thes. 2:3-4) and John (Rev. 13:12-18).

E. Prophetic Markers

1. The Gospel to every people group (Matthew 24:14)
2. The temple must be rebuilt
3. Jewish Leaders must call for Yeshua as the Messiah to return "Baruch Haba bashem YHWH"

V. PREPARING OURSELVES FOR THE FUTURE

A. Watch & Pray (corporately and individually)

B. Cultivate our Personal Relationship with God

C. Stay in Biblical Community (Hebrews 10:25)

D. Have His Heart's Desire as our desire:

1. Gospel to the nations/neighbors
2. Compassion on/justice for the widow/orphan/foreigner/the poor (those in need)
3. Love for Israel

E. Understand Suffering's Purpose and the now & coming glory of God

F. Align Ourselves with YHWH's Calendar

