



Hanukkah: Preparation & Action

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Sons of Issachar

³²from Issachar, men who understood the times and knew what Israel should do—200 chiefs, with all their relatives under their command; (1Chronicles 12:32)

1. 322,622 men from the various tribes had come to join David in his struggle with Saul
2. From Issachar came just 200 leaders
 - a. They were known as men who understood the times
 - b. Knew what Israel should do

B. Sons of Matathias

1. Matathias was an elderly priest
2. Judah was the 3rd son, eventually known as HaMakabi—the Hammer

II. BACKGROUND

A. The Storyline

1. 323 BC Alexander the Great dies
2. 200 BC Judah becomes part of the Seleucid Empire
Leadership of Judah split between those wanting to maintain Jewish law and those wanting to continue Greek lifestyle initiated by Alexander
3. 175 BC Antiochus Epiphanes becomes ruler of Seleucid Empire
Begins a series of oppressive policies against the Jews
4. 165 BC Matathias refuses to sacrifice to Greek gods and kills a Jew offering to take his place
5. 166BC Matathias dies and Judah HaMakabi begins a guerilla war against the Seleucids
Temple is ritually cleansed and rededicated
Legend has it that only one day's worth of sacred oil is found for the Menorah although it burned for 8 full days

III. APPLICATION

A. Connection between Issachar and Makabi

1. Both focused on the bigger picture
 - a. Sons of Issachar studied Torah and determined its guidance for everyday Jewish life
 - a. Used this wisdom to make sound judgments regarding interaction with the times
 - b. Matathias and his family focused on being faithful to God in the face of strong external oppression

B. Societal impact on our lives today

1. We are in a continued season of challenge and unrest
2. American culture is increasingly opposed to Biblical values
 - a. Determined to follow 'me first' value system
 - b. Refuses to acknowledge God or higher value system
 - c. Current culture more and more sees Believers as intolerant
3. Must stay focused on what is important
 - a. Trust in God and pursue His standards
 - b. Spend diligent personal time studying the Word and in communion with God
 - 1) Helps redirect thoughts to Godly values--

- a) Through this we receive personal and corporate strategies like Issachar
 - c. Stay connected to Biblical community
 - 1) Not easy, not convenient, messy; Zoom is a more impersonal substitute
 - d. Build Godly families like the Makabis
- C. God's guidance in the face of calamity—Joel 2
1. Our internal response is consecration

¹²“Even now,” declares the LORD, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.” ¹³Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

 - a. Realize the Day of the Lord is coming
 - 1) Crucial to wisely guiding our actions
 - 2) Causes us to live differently
 - b. Turn to God with all our heart
 - c. Fast: a submission to voluntary weakness
 - 1) Fasting is a Biblical discipline—God promises to reward us if we do it unto Him
 - 2) Removes the temporary ‘props’ so we can realize our weakness before Him
 - 3) Here is a challenge: Why not consider joining the weekly Thursday fast?
 - d. Weep and mourn
 - 1) Repent of our sinfulness with focus and intensity
 - a) we can't “work up” this intensity; must come from drawing near to Him
 - e. Rend our hearts
 - 1) The Oxford Dictionary defines rend as
 - a) Tearing something into two or more pieces
 - b) Causing great emotional pain to someone's heart
 - 2) Is the painful and personal realignment of our lives to align with God's ways
 - 3) Can bring a healing of our inconsistency and hypocrisy
 - f. Abandon our idols
 2. Our external response is warning

¹⁵Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. ¹⁶Gather the people; bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber. ¹⁷Let the priests, who minister before the LORD, weep between the portico and the altar

 - a. Be vocal in inviting everyone into the Kingdom (sound the trumpet)
 - 1) Sounding the trumpet was an alarm that a crisis was at hand
 - a) Only an alarmed people will enter into sacred assemblies
 - 1] All we can do is position ourselves
 - 2] Maybe God will relent—but who knows?
 - 3] Are we prepared if God doesn't relent?
 - 4] Are we really prepared to love as God loves?
 - b) Those who are alarmed are to gather in fear and trembling and beseech the Lord with cries of “have mercy” and “Maranatha”

¹Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming. It is close at hand—
 - c) The prayers of the people will rise to the LORD in such intensity that He will respond with the beginning of the End—the prayers of the saints release the judgments found in Revelation

³Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all God's people, on the golden altar in front of the

throne. ⁴The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God's people, went up before God from the angel's hand. ⁵Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake. (Revelation 8:3-5)

- b. Assemble and pray
 - 1) Gathering together draws us together, prepares our hearts, and strengthens our faith
 - 2) The gathering and prayer of the saints hurries the return of Yeshua
¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:14)
 - 3) Here is a challenge: Join in for at least part of our monthly corporate 6:30-10pm first Saturday
 - a) An opportunity to add your voice to the call for the healing of our nation
 - b) As we move forward we hope these times will increase
- b. Minister to the Lord by prioritizing personal and corporate times with Him

D. The much larger picture

- 1. What we see is only the tip of the iceberg
 - a. We can't do much about the unseen things
 - b. Focus on Godly values
- 2. We as individuals are limited in our ability to stop tyranny in our own strength
 - 1) Need God's strategy and power
- 3. We have a great deal of say in our own actions
 - a. Godly preparation: Follow the Issachar example of Word study, prayer, and devotion
 - b. Godly action: Follow the Makabi example of standing on principle
- 4. We can resist the evil world system
 - a. Watching and praying: Through set-apart times of personal prayer and study
 - 1) Out of this abiding comes personal and corporate action plans
 - 2) Abiding in Him produces fruit
⁵"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)
 - 3) This is the Issachar connection
 - b. Living out our faith
 - 1) Through corporate and personal ministry opportunities
 - 2) Through public God statements
 - a) Making God a part of our everyday public lives
 - b) Through public and private expressions of love
 - c. Resisting ungodliness: Through not aligning ourselves with the evil world system
 - d. Gathering together with other believers
 - 1) We need each other to stand firm
 - 2) The enemy uses offense to isolate us and pick us off
 - e. Preparing to suffer for doing the right thing
 - 1) The world already ridicules us
 - 2) The Day of the Lord is coming
 - 3) This is the Makabi connection

IV. OTHER THEMES

A. Rededicate our personal temple

- 1. The cleansing/rededication at Hanukkah is a foreshadow of the greater cleansing and rededication at the End of days
- 2. Our bodies are Temples of the Holy Spirit

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple. 1Corinthians 3:16-17)

For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." Therefore, "Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." (2Corinthians 6:16-17)

3. We must be diligent at daily rededication.
4. Isaiah 40 offers clues about how to do this

A voice of one calling in the wilderness: "Prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together. (Isaiah 40:3-5)

- a. Make straight a highway: Remain pure and seek the holiness of God; avoid political correctness.
- b. Tear down every mountain: Pride gets in the way: Avoid seeking honor or calling attention to self.
- c. Raise every valley: Resist low thinking and remain rooted in our identity in Christ.
- d. Level the crooked places: Avoid compromise, break free of addictions, and perverse activity.
- e. Smooth the rugged places: Avoid judgment, critical, or mean-spirited thinking.

B. Cultivate a Godly legacy

1. A single extended family, and others, brought about the restoration of an entire nation.
2. They took a stand for Godly values
3. We can find similar expressions in our current venues
 - a. Refuse to enter situations involving vulgar language or content
 - b. Say grace at mealtime even in public settings
 - c. Talk about our faith/hold to higher values
4. Edmond Burke: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."
 - a. When we see evil we must speak up against it.

C. Learn to expect the miraculous

1. This extended family of maybe a few dozen brought down the world power of the day.
2. Following the narrow path builds the expectation that God will use our small efforts as seeds for the miraculous

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. (Matthew 5:13-14)

D. Develop endurance during difficulty

1. Persecution of Godly people is coming.
2. Must be practiced and prepared so as to be faithful to God when it does come.
3. Small trials are presented by God to help train us

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. (James 1:2-4)

E. Shine our light

1. The Maccabees rose up to defend their faith
2. We also are called to be witnesses

You are the light of the world....In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:14,16)

3. For the entirety of our lives we should consider ourselves to be "on mission"
 - a. Are we revealing Jesus to the world?
 - b. Can they tell we are different?