



Hanukkah & the Rise of the Ekklesia

32By smooth *words* he will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant, but the people who know their God will display strength and take action. 33Those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many; yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder for *many* days. Daniel 11:32-33

I. THE HANUKKAH STORY

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 *62Yet 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 Chislev (which became the first night of Hanukkah), they dedicated the altar and offered a sacrifice.

II. WHAT HAS PRECEDED

A. A Worldwide Pruning

1 *“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.* John 15:1-2

1. Do you feel the barrenness? Let it do its good work in you; brokenness, poverty of spirit; mourning for the breakthrough
2. This is a painful but good process: poverty of spirit (as well as the rest of the beatitudes) is to be a consistent pursuit

The secret of spiritual success is a hunger that persists . . . It is an awful condition to be satisfied with one's spiritual attainments . . . God was and is looking for hungry, thirsty people. Smith Wigglesworth

3. Pruning prepares us for coming fruit

B. Calibration: Is He Your greatest pursuit & love? Are the negative circumstances pushing you into Him? Or are you going to other loves and idols for your help

- C. We're Not Going Back to Normal:** We need to emotionally prepare ourselves for the reality that we are not going back to the way things were.

III. PREPARATION

The great men and women of God I am using in the earth today, I am not using them because they are something special, I am using them for one reason and one reason alone: it is because they've touched Me and I have touched them. Rodney Howard-Browne

A. Pray (Time with Him)

1. Personal Times: these are the foundational times of growing in your “secret history” with God
2. Corporate Times: these are important times of praying together with other Believers. There is great encouragement, accountability, solidarity, and effectiveness that comes by praying with each other

B. Obey: As we spend time with God, do we follow what the Scriptures admonish us to do and to obey the little nudges that come from His Spirit.

C. Pray for the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit: This one prayer’s answer will solve a long litany of smaller prayers.

but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. Acts 1:8

IV. WHAT IS COMING

17‘And it shall be in the last days,’ God says, ‘That I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams; 18Even on My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit And they shall prophesy. 19And I will grant wonders in the sky above And signs on the earth below, Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. 20The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood, Before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come. 21And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ Acts 2:17-21

A. We are the Ekklesia: You are the ekklesia & I am the ekklesia. Superstar ministry will happen less and less in the coming days. You and I will be meeting across from other individuals in coffee shops, parks, living rooms, etc. to share with and help other Believers.

B. Structural Changes: the bulk of the growth and discipleship of the kingdom will come in interpersonal and small group interactions.

C. Greatest Promises to Most Messed Up: Yeshua gave some of His greatest promises to the congregation in Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22). This should give us great hope that He has not written us off but has a great future for us provided that we walk in godly obedience.