

Happy Hanukkah!

Daniel 8

Should Christians celebrate Hanukkah?

Michael Rydelnik: “We often fail to understand *the Jewish roots of our faith* and remain ignorant about the Jewish people. And *you* might wonder as well: Why would Hanukkah cookies be appropriate at a Christian school? Why should Christians learn about or even celebrate Hanukkah?” We’re going to make that discovery today—why Christians should “celebrate Hanukkah,” *and then* we’re going to celebrate Hanukkah and Christmas together, two wondrous holi-days.

What Christians should know about Hanukkah:

1. It was _____ by Daniel.

Daniel 8:19-26: This is a prophecy of a future, ruthless king, King Antiochus IV. Those who feared him and wished to honor him, called him “Epiphanes,” “God manifest!” But the persecuted Jews called him “Epimanes,” “_____,” who was a type of the Antichrist—a picture of *the beast* in Revelation to come. Antiochus Epiphanes provides a prophetic foreshadowing of the final Gentile ruler, the Antichrist. But, first of all, he was a real historical person.

Daniel 11:29-35: The amazing thing about these prophecies of Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabees and the Maccabean revolt is that they are all fully fulfilled—every minute detail of Daniel’s prophecies are found in history.

2. It was a _____ event.

The events that inspired Hanukkah, took place in a most turbulent time in Jewish history, between the Testaments, the approximately 400-years between the OT and the NT. Around 200 B.C., Judah came under the control of Antiochus’ father (Antiochus III), the Greek-Syrian king who allowed the Jews who lived in the land to continue to practice their faith in Yahweh their God by keeping the Law of the Covenant, which included undefiled temple worship.

However, his son, Antiochus (IV) Epiphanes, when he became king, because of his hatred for the Jewish people and their God, he outlawed the Jewish religion and ordered the Jews to _____ Greek gods.

Most of the information that we have about this time in ancient history is from the Apocrypha, the name of the 14-books that were recorded between the Old and New Testaments. They were written after OT prophecy had ceased, and are _____ generally recognized as being inspired by God. However, the Apocrypha *is* helpful in understanding what took place between the Testaments, including Daniel's fulfilled prophecy about Antiochus and those who resisted him. **I will be reading out of the Apocrypha from 1 Maccabees 1, 2, 3, & 4.**

To this day, on the 25th of the Jewish month of Chislev—that falls in late November or early December, often overlapping the two months—the Jews celebrate Hanukkah, which means “Dedication.” It began this year at sundown on December 2nd. It's an eight-day celebration that commemorates the purification and re-_____ of the holy Temple in Jerusalem after the victory over the Greek-Syrian King, Antiochus Epimanes, the historical prefigure of the future Antichrist. Hanukkah is often called the *Festival of Lights*, and the holiday—or better holi-day—is celebrated with, among other things, the lighting of the lampstand called the menorah in every Jewish home.

3 . It was _____ by Jesus.

John 10:22: At that time the Feast of Dedication [Hanukkah] took place at Jerusalem. It was winter,²³ and Jesus was walking in the temple [He was there to celebrate Hanukkah], in the colonnade of Solomon.²⁴ So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.”²⁵ Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me,²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep.” Then He plainly declared His deity, stating in verse 30, “I and the Father are One.”

Why should we at least honor the *Festival of Lights*? Because Jesus _____! For us, it would be a purifying re-dedication of *our temple*, which is our own bodies, our own selves to the Light of the World, the

Lord Jesus Christ: “Lord, here’s our heart, our lives, our all. We re-dedicate ourselves and pledge our allegiance to You!”

4 . It was _____ for Christmas.

The Festival of Lights reminds us that without the Maccabean revolt, without the retaking, purifying, and re-dedicating of the temple, there would’ve been no temple for Jesus to worship in, and there would be _____ Christmas. Antiochus was a genocidal madman, who was out to destroy the Jewish people by destroying them and their faith in Yahweh God. If he had succeeded, then Jesus—the Son of Abraham, the Son of David—would not have been born.

Hanukkah reminds us that God preserved the Jewish people and the Jewish faith so that the Jewish Messiah could be born. So, in **Luke 1, the angel said, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”**

Hanukkah reminds us that God will *always* preserve *His people*, all who are in our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came a couple centuries after Hanukkah, *because there was a Hanukkah*. So...

Happy Hanukkah! And, Merry Christmas!