**Hanukkah, the Abomination of Desolation, and the Hammer**

**Theme:** Hanukkah is a story of God’s deliverance, and our dedication to His commandments.

**Introduction:** Hanukkah, also known as the Feast of Dedication, or the Festival of Lights, is an eight-day festival that begins on the 25th day of Kislev, of the Jewish calendar. This corresponds with November & December of the Gregorian calendar.

This festival commemorates the cleansing of the second temple in Jerusalem, and the liberation of the Jewish people, by Judah Maccabees. In 167 BC/BCE. Judah Maccabees (or Judah the hammer) supernaturally liberated God’s people from the Syrian Emperor Antiochus, who referred to himself as Antiochus the Epiphanies, (the divine).

This event took place during what is known as the intertestamental period of the Scriptures. That means that it took place after the writing of the book of Malachi, and 167 years before the birth of Christ.

These are often referred to as the silent years, inferring that God did not speak to His people during this period. To the contrary, we can clearly see that God was most definitely speaking to His people and working supernaturally through them.

**I. Why Study, or Celebrate Hanukkah?**

**1. Jesus, Observed Hanukkah**

**John 10:22 (NKJV)** Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. {23} And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch.

**a)** Jesus was a Judean, but His primary ministry was in region of Galilee, not in Judea. For Him to travel 3 to 5 days to Jerusalem during the time of Hanukkah is significant.

**b)** Hanukkah is rich with both spiritual and prophetic significance.

**c)** Hanukkah means dedication and reminds us to take this time to allow the light of God’s Word to examine our lives in order that we might cleanse our lives from anything that might defile God’s temple.

**d)** Jesus used the story of Hanukkah to warn us of the antichrist and the great deception that will come upon the earth in the last days.

**II. The Story of Hanukkah**

**A. We get the story of Hanukkah from the Apocrypha book of Maccabees.**

**1.** The Apocrypha books are writings of Jewish history that came about between the writing of Malachi to the birth of Messiah.

**2.** These are not considered to be part of scripture and have never been recognized as part of the canon (collection) of the Bible by either the Jewish people or early church fathers.

**3.** While these books are not on par with scripture, they do give us some interesting background into some of Israel’s history**.**

**4.** The books of 1st & 2nd Maccabees is a historical account of the oppression and liberation of the Jewish people by Judah Maccabees (the hammer), and the story of the first Hanukkah celebration.

**B. The story of Hanukkah takes place near the end of the Greek Empire, and during the rise of the great Roman Empire.**

**1.** Israel found itself caught between world powers that wanted to use her as a land bridge between Africa, Europe and Asia.

**2.** Under the rule of Alexander the Great, Hellenism became all pervasive culture of the world.Hellenism gave birth to philosophy, human reason, intellectualism, and moral relativism.

**3.** Alexander the Great was determined to Hellenize the entire world, and bring all religions, and people under the dictates of a single language, culture, and religious world view.

**a)** After the death of Alexander, the Great, his three generals seized control of his vast empire, dividing it into three states.

* The Antigonid Empire ruled by Antigonus took over Greece and Macedon, where they ruled strongly until the Romans invaded
* The Ptolemic Dynasty ruled by Ptolemy took Egypt and settled there, but lost their land to the Romans
* The Seleucid Empire ruled by Seleucus was the largest part of the empire. *(See Map)*

**4.** Around 200 BCE Israel was conquered by the Seleucid Syrian dynasty as part of a campaign against Egypt.

**C. Antiochus the Epiphanies**

**1.** In the year 175 BCE, Antiochus IV inherited the throne of Seleucid (Syria), and declared himself Epiphanes or divine. Behind his back people called him Epimanes or mad man.

**2.** Antiochus imposed strict Hellenism upon his kingdom, and required mandatory Greek language, Greek culture, and religion.

**3.** In 169 BCE Antiochus and his army are humiliated, and defeated in their conquest of Egypt, when the Roman legions landed with ships from Kittim ending his advance. On His return back home, he attacks Israel and sacks the city of Jerusalem. **Daniel 11:29-30 (NKJV)** "At the appointed time he shall return and go toward the south; but it shall not be like the former or the latter. {30} "For ships from Cyprus shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant, and do damage. So he shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant.

**1 Maccabees 1:20-25** after Antiochus had defeated Egypt in the year one hundred and forty-three (170 BCE), he returned and went up to Israel and to Jerusalem with a strong force. He insolently invaded the sanctuary and took away the golden altar, the lampstand for light with all its fixtures, the offering table, the cups the bowls, the golden censers, the curtain, the crowns, and the golden ornament on the façade of the temple. He stripped off everything and took away the gold and silver and the precious vessels; he also took all the hidden treasures he could find. And the table of the showbread, and the pouring vessels, and the vials, and the censers of gold, and the veil, and the crown, and the golden ornaments that were before the temple, all which he pulled off. And when he had taken all away, he went into his own land, having made a great massacre, and spoken very proudly. Therefore, there was a great mourning in Israel, in every place where they dwelt.

**III. The Abomination of Desolation**

**A. Antiochus is the greatest type of the antichrist in history.**

**1.** Antiochus desecrates the temple by slaughtering hogs on the altar and setting up a statue of the Greek god Zeus.

**Daniel 11:31 (NKJV)** "And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, **and place there the abomination of desolation.**

**B. Jesus declares that Daniel’s prophecy speaks of yet another desecration of the temple and the slaughter of the Jewish people just before his second coming. Matthew 24:1-22 (**

**C. The Great Tribulation and the Second Coming**

**1.** Jesus was declaring that this sign given by the prophet Daniel of the desecration of the temple was a major event that would take place just prior to his return. **Matthew 24:29-44…** 3**7But as the days of Noah *were,* so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.**

**2.** Jesus is telling us that just prior to his return much of the world as in the time of Noah, will carry on as if everything has continued as normal. They will be oblivious to the peril at hand. **2 Peter 3:3-14, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-10**

**II. Antiochus the antichrist**

**A. Antiochus serves as one of the greatest types of the antichrist in history.**

**1.** Through the actions of Antiochus, we have a very clear example of what the antichrist and the end time beast government of Revelation 13 & 14 will look like.

**2.** Antiochus issues decrees that all nations are to relinquish their religions and cultures to the Greek culture of Hellenism.

**a)** On the 15th day of the month of Kislev, in the year one hundred forty-five (168 BCE), the king erected the horribleabomination upon the altar, and in the surrounding cities of Judah they built pagan altars, and burnt incense at the doors of the houses and in the streets.

**b)** They tore apart, and burnt any Torah scrolls they found, and whoever observed the commandments of God were put to death.

**c)** Women, and their families who had their children circumcised, were put to death, and their children were hanged.

**B. Antiochus, like the antichrist of Revelation 13 makes decrees in blasphemy against God.**

**Daniel 7:25 (NKJV)** He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, And shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand For a time and times and half a time.

**Revelation 13: (NKJV)** And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. **6**Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. **7**It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. **8**All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. **Consider the decrees of Antiochus.** You shall profane the Sabbath. You shall profane the festivals and holy days. You shall set up idols. You shall eat unclean animals. You shall not circumcise your sons. You shall forget the Torah. **2 Thessalonians 2:8-9 (NKJV)** And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. {9} The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,

**The Greek word for lawless** is *anomos, which means without law, or one who does not keep the law, or a transgressor of the law.* The law is referring to God’s law of the Torah. Therefore, the antichrist will be against Torah, or against the commandments of God.

**3. While many Jews turned away from God to save their lives, others who remained true to the Torah paid with their lives.**

**Daniel 11:32 (NKJV)** "Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.

**C. Stories of Jewish resistance fighters**

**Eliezer:** The aged scribe resisted both the efforts of the Syrian authorities to force him to eat pork in violation of Torah, (Lev 11:7-8) and his friends’ suggestion that he eat some other meat—ritually pure and secretly obtained—in public in order to deceive his oppressors and spare his life. He refused, and so accepted death on the rack, and instrument of torture on which the victim was stretched until the limbs were torn from his body.

**Hannah:** All seven of her sons were martyred before her eyes, because they refuse to disobey God’s commandment, and submit to the edicts of Antiochus. As they died they pronounced God’s judgment upon their captors. The story goes, that after her sons’ were put to death she cried out “father Abraham has nothing on me, for he gave one son, but I have given seven.”

**Judith:** Pretended to seduce an enemy general, and then kills him to liberate her entire village.

**Mattityahu (Matthew):** He and his sons were priests who fled Jerusalem, to the town of Modein, when the temple was defiled. Mattityahu had five sons. **1 Maccabees 2:7-14** When he saw the defilement of the nation, and his people he cried out, “Alas! Why was I born to see this, the ruin of my people, the ruin of the holy city, and to live there when it was given over to the enemy, the sanctuary given over to aliens? 8 Her temple has become like a person without honor; 9 her glorious vessels have been carried into exile. Her infants have been killed in her streets, her youths by the sword of the foe.10 What nation has not inherited her palacesand has not seized her spoils? 11All her adornment has been taken away; no longer free, she has become a slave.2 And see, our holy place, our beauty, and our glory have been laid waste; the Gentiles have profaned them.13 Why should we live any longer?” 14Then Mattathias and his sons tore their clothes, put on sackcloth, and mourned greatly.

**1. Eventually the officers in charge of suppressing any insurrection came to Modein to organize a sacrifice to the Greek gods.**

**1 Maccabees 2:19-27** But Mattathias*(Mattityahu, Matthew)* answered and said in a loud voice: “Even if all the nations that live under the rule of the king obey him, and have chosen to obey his commandments, everyone of them abandoning the religion of their ancestors, 20I and my sons and my brothers will continue to live by the covenant of our ancestors. 21Far be it from us to desert the law and the ordinances. 22We will not obey the king’s words by turning aside from our religion to the right hand or to the left.”23When he had finished speaking these words, a Jew came forward in the sight of all to offer sacrifice on the altar in Modein, according to the king’s command. 24When Mattathias *(Mattityahu, Matthew)* saw it, he burned with zeal and his heart was stirred. He gave vent to righteous anger; he ran and killed him on the altar. 25At the same time he killed the king’s officer who was forcing them to sacrifice, and he tore down the altar. 26Thus he burned with zeal for the law, just as Phinehas did against Zimri son of Salu. **27Then Mattathias cried out in the town with a loud voice, saying: “Let everyone who is zealous for the law and supports the covenant come out with me!”**

**2. The Hammers:** Soon Mattityahu and his sons were joined in the mountains by other freedom fighters. **These rebels came to be called Maccabees, which means Hammers.** The most famous of the Hammers was Mattityahu’s son Judah, who came to be known as Judah Maccabees or Judah the Hammer. **Daniel 11:33 (NKJV)** "And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet for many days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering. **Revelation 13:4-10**

**3.** This small army of resistance fighters soon attracted the attention of Antiochus, who send one half of his army to crush the resistance in Israel.

**4.** Greatly outnumbered, Judah rallies his small army.

**1 Maccabees 3:46-60** Then they gathered together and went to Mizpah, opposite Jerusalem, because Israel formerly had a place of prayer in Mizpah. 47They fasted that day, put on sackcloth and sprinkled ashes on their heads, and tore their clothes. 48And they opened the book of the law to inquire into those matters about which the Gentiles consulted the likenesses of their gods. 49They also brought the vestments of the priesthood and the first fruits and the tithes, and they stirred up the nazirites who had completed their days; 50and they cried aloud to Heaven, saying, “What shall we do with these? Where shall we take them?51 Your sanctuary is trampled down and profaned, and your priests mourn in humiliation.52 Here the Gentiles are assembled against us to destroy us; you know what they plot against us. How will we be able to withstand them, if you do not help us?”54Then they sounded the trumpets and gave a loud shout. 55After this Judas appointed leaders of the people, in charge of thousands and hundreds and fifties and tens. 56Those who were building houses, or were about to be married, or were planting a vineyard, or were fainthearted, he told to go home again, according to the law. 57Then the army marched out and encamped to the south of Emmaus.58And Judas said, “Arm yourselves and be courageous. Be ready early in the morning to fight with these Gentiles who have assembled against us to destroy us and our sanctuary. 59It is better for us to die in battle than to see the misfortunes of our nation and of the sanctuary. 60But as his will in heaven may be, so shall he do.”

**a)** At Beth-horon Judah Maccabees, and his small band of raiders miraculously route the army of Antiochus.

**Hebrews 11:33-34 (NKJV)** And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also *of* David and Samuel and the prophets: **33**who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, **34**quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

**III. Cleansing and Dedication (Hanukkah) of the Temple.**

**1.** When Judah, and his brothers enter Jerusalem, they are dismayed to see the city gates burned with fire, the temple courtyard overgrown with weeds and grass, and the temple desolate. They tore their garments, and blow the shofar.

**2**. Judah and his brothers begin to cleans the temple, and prepare it for worship.

**3.** On Kislev 25, exactly three years after the first swine had been sacrificed in the temple, Judah and his men reinstate the daily sacrifices.

**4.** Tradition tells that they only had enough ceremonial oil to light the menorah for one day, but that when it was lit, it burned for eight days until more could be prepared. This is why Hanukkah is an eight-day observance, and why the Hanukkah menorah has eight branches.

**5.** The second book of Maccabees records that actually the eight days of the first Hanukkah dedication were to correspond with the eight days of the feast of Sukkot, at which Solomon dedicated the first temple.

**Conclusion:** Hanukkah is a story of hope, and rededication. Just as God’s temple in Jerusalem was rededicated and cleansed from the filth sin, so we are to be reminded through the keeping of the Hanukkah festival to cleanse ourselves of all that would defile us.

**1 Corinthians 3:16-17 (NKJV**) Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? {17} If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.