

## Christmas and the Contrasting Hanukkah Connection

Before the linking of "Christmas" celebrations to Jesus, there was Hanukkah. Both holidays fall outside of their scriptural canons. No biblical authorization for the observance of Hanukkah exists – except for following Jesus' example in its observance. (John 10:22, Feast of Dedication = Hanukkah) The Bible does not even suggest the observance of Jesus' birth. Instead it focuses on His Passover sacrifice and wave sheaf resurrection. (1Corinthians 5:7-8; Leviticus 23:5 - 11)

In the United States and the West in general, both days have become cherished times for family reunions and lavish gift giving. I could easily get distracted by the over commercialization of both days' observance, but I won't. Frankly, this time of year I lean to attending the [Church of Stop Shopping](#) more than at any other time. Regardless of my personal inclinations, everyone agrees that the emotionally pleasing, socio-secular aspects of these days' celebrations owe more to pagan tradition than to biblical revelation and principle, yet I do find some spiritual linkages of interest and edification. To keep the discussion short, I will not cite the many sources for thoughts mostly borrowed from other researchers now reassembled for our discussion.

Jesus was probably born in September during the month of Tishri in the Hebrew calendar. At that time of year the shepherds were still in the fields, for example, while they aren't in December. Secondly, Jesus died in April at approximately 33½ years of age. Just move a half year backwards or forwards to His approximate birth month. Any quick search of the net will give you umpteen discussions on the pagan origins of Christmas relating to the winter solstice and the rebirth of the Sun(god). The day became fixed in the Roman Christian calendar to make a doctrinal statement: that Jesus was born the Son of God being fully human and fully divine.

The efficiency of ancient religious bureaucracy was such that the committee of bishops chose a date for religious observance and communication of the doctrine of Jesus' human/divine nature that would both reflect a probably truthful tradition and elimination celebratory competition. I suspect that the truthful tradition that Jesus was conceived on the first day of Hanukkah, Kislev 25. The Roman church sought to distance itself from her Jewish roots so just as Easter was dislocated from the Jewish Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread (Nisan 14/15-22), Hanukkah's first day (the 25<sup>th</sup>) was moved from Kislev to December. This is why the two holidays usually overlap or fall within a week of each other. This substitution of birth for conception added modesty to the discussion but undermines a major contention of the pro-life movement that life begins with conception.

So conservative Christian consistency should exchange the celebration of Jesus' birth as part of the Roman calendar of the Sun's Birthday for the celebration of the miraculous conception on the first day of Hanukkah. Hanukkah's symbols work marvelously with the appearance of miraculous light in a temple of stone. Just as the oil lamp had to be lit the first time, so Mary agreed to receive the miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit from God. The lamp burned eight days miraculously while more oil was prepared according to religious requirements. This eight-day period is analogous to the eight days between birth and circumcision, when the Jewish male baby becomes signed in the flesh with the covenant of Abraham. Thus, Hanukkah's length of celebration looks forward to a divine light becoming born in a material temple in a major but fractional fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham.

### Hanukkah - In the World Not Of It

The story of Hanukkah is about these challenges to faith and freedom that the Jewish people faced so long ago. It is about how a minority of those who remained loyal to God struggled to overcome the evil oppression of a Syrian Hellenistic king who considered himself a god of this world. That king was Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Epiphanes means "God manifest."

In 167 BC, the armies of Antiochus ravaged and profaned the temple of God in Jerusalem. They defiled the temple's holy altar with swine's blood and set up idols and images to the Greek gods. But not all of the Jewish people succumbed to Antiochus' oppression. In spite of overwhelming odds, a dedicated minority of faithful individuals and families chose to serve God rather than to conform to the pattern of this world. For more on this, read our article [Hanukkah at the End of the Age, 8 Ways for 8 Days](#).

The Jewish Feast of Hanukkah celebrates the cleansing of the temple in Jerusalem in 165 BC. This dedication occurred within the context of the liberation of the returned Jewish exiles from the oppression of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who was a prophetic ante-type (forerunner) of the coming Antichrist or Beast. Daniel predicted these events as recorded in Daniel 11: 21-35, which is referenced by and merges with Jesus' prophecy of the Last Days in Luke 21 and Matthew 24 (especially v.15).

In the biblical history and prophecy of Israel, political liberation always goes hand-in-hand with spiritual liberation, because the truth makes free. In the first commandment the God of Israel identifies Himself as the One who brought Israel out of Egypt. Then, the Jewish people had to be free, and largely dedicated, as a nation to God's service, or Jesus could not have been born into a home enabling Him to enjoy a sinless infancy. Today, because of His sinless sacrifice, the faithful are delivered from the Kingdom of Darkness. (Colossians 1:11-16)

The miracle of Hanukkah focused on the re-lighting of the temple's menorah, or seven-branched lamp stand. The Maccabees only had oil enough for one day, but it burned for eight days – the time that passes between birth and circumcision. There was no ark in this re-built temple, but God placed His presence there in this miracle. I believe that this miracle indicated that the true Light of the World was soon to come to His temple. Only 160 or so years later, Yeshua was begotten by the Holy Spirit, born and circumcised in the flesh as a man - eight days after His birth. (Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:35 and 2:21) Read [The Good Shepherd: What Jesus Taught on Hanukkah](#) for the rest of the story.