

**Text:** Various

**Title:** Hannukah and the Light of Christmas

**Truth:** The light of Hannukah reminds us of the LIGHT of Christmas.

**Date/Location:** December 10, 2023 at FBC

## Introduction

John 10:22 – Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter.

It is called the **Feast of Dedication** because around 165 or 164 B.C., the Jewish people cleansed and re-dedicated their temple and altar in Jerusalem. It had been polluted by the Syrian ruler Antiochus Epiphanies who paganized the region. The Maccabean revolted against Antiochus and eventually drove the Syrians out of their homeland. They were known as Hasmoneans because of the name of their ancestor and that name stuck for the following dynasty of leaders. Because of the prominence of the Maccabean family in this Jewish victory, the feast was sometimes called the **Feast of the Maccabees**.

It is also called the **Festival of Lights** because “The original Feast of Dedication involved a miracle, according to rabbinic tradition. When the Jews re-entered the temple they could only find one small, sealed jug of olive oil that had not been profaned or contaminated by the Seleucids. They used this to light the [menorah](#) in the temple, and though the oil was only enough to last one day, it miraculously lasted eight days—time for more oil to be made ready. This is the reason [the Festival of Lights] lasts for eight days.”<sup>1</sup> As much as some of us might like to

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/Feast-of-Dedication.html>

imagine the miracle story to be true, we do not have direct eyewitness testimony to verify it, so we will have to leave it at that. The true miracle was the defeat of the Syrian power by a small bunch of Jews.

This is why modern menorahs have 9 lamps: 8 for the days of the miracle and one more to light the other 8.

The menorah (which translates as *lampstand* in English) is described in **Exodus 25:31-39** as a 7-light menorah made of pure gold. Built from a talent of gold, it was worth many hundreds of thousands of dollars. If the talent were 100 pounds, that would be over \$3 million dollars in today's gold price (\$2.4 million of it were a 75-pound talent).<sup>2</sup> It was a very precious light-bearer.

**Exodus 27:20-21** instructs that the lampstand be tended nightly and daily.

This feast is not otherwise mentioned in the Bible, nor established in the Law given through Moses, but it is nevertheless important to our Jewish friends and a fitting symbol of endurance through extraordinarily dark nights of persecution and the light of God that guides and shines at the end of that road.

I have been speaking about the festival we know better today as **Hanukkah**, which is the Hebrew word for "dedication." This year it is celebrated right at this time—Dec 7 through 15, 2023. It was this festival that is mentioned in John 10:22 when Jesus walked on the

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<sup>2</sup> The heavier talent in the first century AD was nearly 130 pounds. The Roman talent about 71 pounds.

eastern side of the temple edifice, a place known as Solomon's porch.<sup>3</sup>

Some may think it strange that I speak of Hanukkah at a Christian Christmas program, but I do so for a couple of reasons: **First**, I want on behalf of our church family to extend a hand of friendship and welcome to our Jewish friends. We Christians want to befriend you who may feel darkness around this year's holiday time. We have not forgotten you, and we have not forgotten our Jewish heritage, for the ancient promises that we hold dear—to Abraham, to David, and to the house of Israel and Judah in what is called the New Covenant—were to the Jewish people first. Those promises include special provisions for the Gentiles, for, in Abraham's covenant, God promises that *all* the families of the earth shall be blessed.

But also, **secondly**, I speak of Hanukkah at this time to establish a connection in our minds between the physical light of the menorah for the temple and the spiritual light God gave at the first Christmas.

The light of the menorah is a picture of God's presence—which was literally in the temple where the menorah was originally and where years earlier God had chosen to dwell in a special way. This is because light is a symbol of God—of His purity, of His glory, of His self-disclosure in nature, and the human conscience, and His word which we call the Bible.

What is it that makes Jesus's birth so famous that a world-wide holiday is celebrated in His honor? It happened in a

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<sup>3</sup> 800 feet long, 162 Corinthian columns with capitals to support it, some over 100 feet tall. It was located to the east of the temple, the eastern edge of the temple mount. Along the south side of the temple mount was the *royal stoa*, also a columned structure.

small town called Bethlehem to poor parents in a tiny country under the boot of Rome two millennia ago. It should have faded into total obscurity. But this birth is famous because of the later works and words of Jesus, the eye witnessed miracles and teaching, His confrontation with self-righteous religious leaders, His death, His resurrection, His tremendous impact on the world through His followers and those who wrote about Him, and the complete transformation that He works in those who choose to follow Him down to this day. All of that caused people to go back in history and pay very special attention to His birth. It was like no other.

What happened when Jesus was born was that God's light of life came into the world. The Jewish Messiah, the Christian's Lord and Savior is the light of the world (John 8:12). Anyone who trusts in Him will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life. In His light, we see light (Psalm 36:9). Isaiah says, "The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined" (9:2). "The Lord is my light and my salvation" (Psalm 27:1).

## **II. Lyrics of "How Dark the Night"**

Words by Chris Anderson. Music by Greg Habegger. Tune:  
WIGGINS

How dark the night in Bethlehem  
Where trav'lers sought for rest;  
How crude the cave they sheltered in  
While sheep and oxen slept.  
Yet Light burst forth into the world,  
Dispelling sin and strife.

The Child born to a virgin girl  
Was Christ, the Light of Life.

How dark the night o'er pastures bleak  
Where shepherds kept their watch;  
How cold the wind which stole their sleep  
And stung their weary flock.  
But glory pierced the midnight sky  
And turned fatigue to fright;  
"The King is born!" the angel cried  
To hail the birth of Light.

How dark the night of fallen souls,  
By sin and guilt oppressed;  
How hopeless our unspoken woe—  
Of God and good bereft;  
Till Jesus breaks our moral night  
And melts the heart of stone;  
"All praise to God in heaven's height,  
And peace to men below."

How dark the night that shrouds the world  
Where war and anguish reign;  
How fierce our swords, how sharp our words,  
How piercing is our pain.  
O Christ, return like blazing dawn—  
The Morning Star of Light!  
The Lord Himself will be our Sun,  
And day eclipse the night!

## II. Explanation

A. The first two verses refer to the historical events with which we are familiar—the baby lying in a manger and angels visiting the shepherds out in their field.

B. The third and fourth verses.

The third verse speaks of a darkness that we all have in our souls. It is hard to be objective and recognize its presence because we have a natural tendency to justify ourselves.

The fourth verse speaks of a darkness that we can more easily see because we are not looking inside, but outside. We can see the darkness of the world around us. War. Suffering. Persecution. Death. Genocide and desire for genocide. Religious conflict. Disasters. Pain.

C. Jesus the anointed one came to bring light to both these realms of darkness—our individual souls, and the world as a whole.

The hymn O Little Town of Bethlehem expresses the idea on the individual side, expressing how Christ will encompass your life if you meekly receive him:

No ear may hear His coming,  
but in this world of sin,  
where meek souls will receive Him  
still,  
the dear Christ enters in.

And the hymn Joy to the World expresses the idea on the global side, describing when the Lord will return to set the cosmic order aright.

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!  
Let earth receive her King!

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!

No more let sins and sorrows grow,  
nor thorns infest the ground;  
He comes to make His blessings flow  
far as the curse is found..

He rules the world with truth and  
grace,  
and makes the nations prove  
the glories of His righteousness  
and wonders of His love,

- D. Christians do believe that Jesus will come a second time, though differently than He entered humanity the first time. At that time, the world's darkness will be solved by divine intervention. Jesus came to bring light into the entire world. For ourselves, we cannot wait until then because we will likely perish without hope before that time comes, and if it does come and we are not on friendly terms with the Coming King, then we will be in a bad situation.
- E. For the darkness of our souls, we do not have an electronic "light meter" that can measure it, but we know that the darkness level is above zero. God has built into us a meter called our conscience, and when it is well informed, it gives a good reading of the darkness within. Sometimes we are dull to that darkness, even saying that we have no sin. Other times, we feel that darkness more pointedly. We experience thoughts of guilt... vengeance... hatred... anger... inordinate desires... jealousy...

covetousness... lust... evil thoughts... even blasphemy or slander against God.

The purpose of the menorah was to give light in front of it (Ex. 25:37). The purpose Jesus came was to bring light and eternal life to men. When Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Feast of Dedication, he reiterated that He is the Messiah, and that those who hear His words and believe in Him. He *assures* them salvation.

If you sense that you are in darkness...or you don't!...know this: Jesus is the light that produces life. He is the light of the world. He is the light to every man. Each of us has enough information from nature, our conscience, and the Bible to know we have a heart of darkness within us, and we need to be cleansed and forgiven.

He is the author of your present life; the provider of eternal life; the light of God's holiness and his self-disclosure. He is the light of God's guidance so you know what to do and where to go.

"I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness." (John 12:46). Believe in that light, dear ones, so that you will become a son or daughter of the light. You yourself will have a light source in and around you that will drive out the dark of the sins within, and help you to conquer those that attack outside.

## **Conclusion**

Let's boil it down: we need to believe that God sent His Son as our Savior. God urges us to believe the truth that Jesus came to die for our sins and offer us the free light of life. Believe the truth that He came as a baby; He died as



Savior; He rose again from the dead as Lord; and that He will reign as King. If you take this King as your own, you will be cleansed and your darkness will become light.

And remember, soon the day will dawn and the daystar will arise over the entire earth, bringing comprehensive peace on earth and good will among mankind. The Lord Jesus will return and there will be a time of great joy to the world because the ancient wrongs will be righted and whatever is the best way to run a society will be the rule of the day. You can see that only if you are brought into the family of light which is under Jesus.

MAP

## Light in John's Gospel – Powerful

[John 1:4](#) In Him was life, and the life was the [light](#) of men.

[John 1:5](#) And the [light](#) shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

[John 1:7](#) This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the [Light](#), that all through him might believe.

[John 1:8](#) He was not that [Light](#), but *was sent* to bear witness of that [Light](#).

[John 1:9](#) That was the true [Light](#) coming into the world which gives [light](#) to every man.

Jesus Himself is the light. This light is not an inner light that produces knowledge of God in the human soul. Rather, it refers to God's holiness and disclosure of Himself in nature, conscience, and His word. He is light, and naturally disburses it wherever He is seen or heard of or known.

[John 3:19](#) And this is the condemnation, that the [light](#) has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than [light](#), because their deeds were evil.

[John 3:20](#) For everyone practicing evil hates the [light](#) and does not come to the [light](#), lest his deeds should be exposed.

[John 3:21](#) But he who does the truth comes to the [light](#), that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

[John 5:35](#) He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his [light](#).

[John 8:12](#) Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the [light](#) of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the [light](#) of life.”

[John 9:5](#) As long as I am in the world, I am the [light](#) of the world.”

[John 11:9](#) Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the [light](#) of this world.

[John 11:10](#) But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the [light](#) is not in him.”

[John 12:35](#) Then Jesus said to them, “A little while longer the [light](#) is with you. Walk while you have the [light](#), lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going.

[John 12:36](#) While you have the [light](#), believe in the [light](#), that you may become sons of [light](#).”

These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.

[John 12:46](#) I have come *as* a [light](#) into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.