

FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS – Hanukkah and the Light of the World • A teaching on Hanukkah

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MAIN VERSES

[Matthew 5:14](#) • [Matthew 5:15](#) • [Matthew 5:16](#) • [Jeremiah 29](#)

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Welcome Home

All right. Well, Shabbat Shalom, everybody. Good to be back after one week. I guess we didn't meet last week. One thing that I would never get tired of, but is also kind of weird at the same time, is just how packed we are for worship. How many people we have singing and kind of the chaotic clamor because of all the children. And we bless them, and then they go to children's class, and it is as if a vacuum has been created. It's just, I love it.

So today, I figured it was an appropriate time to speak on Hanukkah, right? Hanukkah. And we'll run through a little bit of history, and then we'll try to find some application and lessons related to our calling that Yeshua calls us to be the light of the world, and to not hide our light, and to not find excuses to diminish the light or to create some other form of our own that we project as light but isn't.

Hanukkah: Themes and Meaning

And so if you're unfamiliar with Hanukkah, Hanukkah is a Jewish holiday that today celebrates many different aspects, but throughout history they kind of evolved. It celebrates the endurance of the Jewish people through times of opposition and oppression and not losing identity and not

yielding to assimilation and outside influences. It has themes of rededication and the fact that God is always there waiting. It celebrates God's miracles, which is a theme in 2 Maccabees specifically. We have the theme of pushing back the darkness with light. And again, all of these different themes permeate from this holiday. And it just has a really, really, really neat history, which I find awesome.

160 Years Before Yeshua

So around 160 years B.C., before Yeshua was born, Judea, or the residents of that, Jews, were being oppressed and tortured by King Antiochus IV. And he was the king of over the Seleucid Empire. It was pretty much a section of the Greek Empire. Everybody knows who Alexander the Great is, right? He's the guy that said, you know what? I'm going to conquer the world. And he did it by like age 32. What have you done? I'm like, he died mysteriously at 32, right? Anyway, when Alexander the Great was passing away on his deathbed, he was asked, hey, who do you want to leave your kingdom to? The world. The Greek Empire. And he said, to the strongest. So he distributed it to his four generals that were under him.

And two of those generals, Ptolemy and Seleucus, obtained the land over in Egypt and Mesopotamia on the two sides of Judea, Israel, if you will. You bored yet? We're good. And so as leaders or empires that were beginning to grow, they began to do what empires always do. They lived peacefully. They never grabbed at power. They never tried to exploit one another to gain more wealth or manipulation, right? No. Empires do that. That's why the Bible relates them as a whole to beasts that just ravage and rape and pillage the earth and the people of it so that they can consume and gain power. It's [Daniel 7](#) and the entire book of Revelation.

Where Empires Collide

So these beasts were formed on either side of Israel, the land of Judea, and over Israel. And so as one would fight, the other would fight, they would obtain control over Judea and the Jews, and then the other one would come in and defeat that one and take Judea. And the reason why Judea, Israel, was such a prominent place or a well sought after place is because we look at its location. It's what connects the resources of Egypt over to greater Mesopotamia. It connects, it's the highway, it's the hub, central hub. That's why the Roman Empire loved it because it had this huge interstate right there where goods can flow through and money can be made.

And so, long story short, after several generations, the Seleucid Empire came in and defeated the Ptolemaic Empire over that area, and they obtained possession of Judea, Israel. And

Antiochus IV is a show of force. As he was coming back from battle, he walked through Judea, he walked into Jerusalem, marched in the temple, and said, this is some pretty neat souvenirs. Took the menorah, took the altar of incense, the table of showbread, took it all back home with him as a souvenir. And he turned the temple of God into a temple of Zeus, dedicated to Zeus now.

Defilement and Persecution

Unclean sacrifices to Zeus began to be made. Temple prostitution or prostitution in general became a type of thing that was promoted in the temple of Yahweh. This is the temple, the grand temple that was rebuilt after the exile, the temple devoted to God. And now it has become this pagan thing that is unclean, pigs being sacrificed, prostitutes, and the worship of idols, defiling the temple.

And he also had a vision, he had a dream, where all of his empire that he has now acquired and expanded would be of one mind and one people. And what he meant was Everybody from all the different areas, all the different nations and cultures all over the empire, y'all need to just go ahead and throw away all of your traditions, all of your particular heritage customs, and become like me. Greek faith, Greek identity, Greek culture, and just throw everything else away.

So when it came to the Jews in Judea, well, that was an issue because that's the Sabbath, that's circumcision, that's studying the Torah, that's calling Yahweh God, that's all of that. They said, yeah, you guys need to do this and it's going to be punishable unto death if you don't. So no big deal, right?

And to a lot of Jews during that time, they were impressed at the popularity of Hellenization, the Greek influence coming in. Many of them were happy to do it, right? But many of them were not. We have stories recorded where mothers were strangled alongside their children because of circumcision. They chose to get their children circumcised and break the law. You have people being killed refusing to eat unclean meat, pig meat and such, or sacrifice to these idols. It was not a fun time. It was pretty bad. Pretty bad. All in the pursuit of raising up empire.

A Stand Is Taken

And so you had a priestly family known as the Hasmoneans. And one of the priestly family stood up and he said, you know what, guys? We can take them. It was a few of us. I know it's a big Greek army. We can take them. All that are zealous for God's Torah and His covenant, follow me. And a Jewish insurgency formed against these foreign occupiers. This little Jewish army

formed and began fighting against this Syrian Greek army. And they begin to win. Won't be darned. They begin to win the battles, push them back, fighting to get their independence back. Until finally they pushed the Greek occupiers out of Jerusalem and they took the temple back. It's a big deal.

And so they walked into the temple. They took out the idols. They destroyed the altar there because it had been defiled while it was there, and they didn't want to look up on the same altar knowing that stuff went on on it and around it. So they just destroyed it and built a new altar. And they began scrubbing with bleach just everything. They were trying to cleanse the temple so that they could rededicate it back to God after all of the horrible things that had taken place there.

A Day to Remember

And around two or three years, depending on the chronology, on the same day that the foreigners dedicated this temple to their god, the 25th of Kislev, they said, no, this day we're taking it back too. And they rededicated the temple to their god, Yahweh, on that same day, 25th of Kislev. This will be the day when we remember that we made a stand and we took back what the oppressors tried to take from us. And for eight days, a rededication festival took place. And it was decreed that this celebration will take place every year so that we will remember, no matter what, how bad the oppression, how bad the circumstances, no matter how dark it seemed to have gotten, there is always a new beginning. Always. There is always a second chance, and there is nothing that can push us too far away from God and his presence.

Understanding Hanukkah

And so we get details from Hanukkah from several different sources. One of them is the first book of Maccabees. There's also another book, second book of Maccabees. We have Josephus, sparse mention in the New Testament, as well as the later Mishnah Talmud. And when you read 1 and 2 Maccabees, it's fascinating because they're not written around the same time. One was written much later for a different agenda. But the first book of Maccabees details these events that happen, and the focus is primarily on dedicating the temple. Dedicating the temple. That's where the name comes from. The Hebrew word for dedication in one of the Hebrew words is Hanukkah. That's where we get the name Hanukkah, because of the dedication.

If you have ever read the second book of Maccabees, it's actually a letter to the Jews that are residing in Egypt and the Judeans in Judea are saying, hey, you guys need to keep this too, and

here's why. And it details all of these associations with why they should be celebrating it because of the miraculous things that God did during this revolt, during this revolution. And so it really has an emphasis on miracles, if you will. And it's in 2 Maccabees where Hanukkah becomes associated with the Feast of Tabernacles.

So in the Torah, you have Passover, and if you miss Passover, then you have second Passover, right? It's like second breakfast. But second Passover a month later, and if you miss the first one, you can do Passover again.

Sukkot and the Temple Rededication

And in 2 Maccabees, this is kind of what they're portraying the idea over to these other Jews in Egypt. They're like, listen, it's Sukkot, but it's second Sukkot, because that's also the day in [1 Kings 8](#) when King Solomon dedicated the first temple of God. It was during Sukkot. So we got to miss that one, but we're not waiting a whole other year. We're going to do this now on the same day. And so we want you guys to celebrate this every single year along with us. Eight days celebrating this, what God has done and allowed us to take back this temple and push away the darkness.

Now, from the time these accounts were written to the first century, a lot of things took place. And we'll talk about that next week if you're interested. A lot of very interesting things happened. Although the temple was rededicated to God and the Greeks were pushed out of Jerusalem and at times Judea, the Greeks still remained the overseer of the area. It was still their empire. I mean, they still had the power. Israel just had a little bit of independence for once in a long time.

Playing the Game of Empire

And well, the Greeks still remained as an overseer of part of Judea and they ended up exploiting their power again and do what empires do and they installed an illegitimate high priest. Actually one of the later Hasmoneans. We always think that Hanukkah ended and the Jewish people are free now and they won the battle and so on and so forth if you studied Hanukkah. And it was like that for like a week and that's awesome. But guess what happens when you use violence to come into power? You begin playing the game of empire and you're not going to be able to escape it and so in order to maintain that power guess what you have to become and guess what the Maccabeans become guess what the Hasmonians became the players in the game of empire politics usage of violence to oppress their own people to remain in power so the

Greeks not long after this a couple on down the lawn they established Jonathan Maccabeus if you will or Jonathan as the high priest there

And he was not a legitimate high priest, but it was a way that the Greek armies or the Greek empire could maintain control over Judea. And they continued doing that, if you will, making these proxy high priests, proxies of power until the Romans came in and kind of took over and now we're at the time of Yeshua. So yeah. We also have a first century writing concerning the history of Hanukkah from Josephus.

Josephus and the Festival of Lights

Now, Josephus was a first century historian, Jewish historian, that wrote in the latter part of the first century. And here is what he writes about the reasoning for Hanukkah, the history of Hanukkah. So now we're getting closer to right after the time of Yeshua. Here's what he speaks about in his writing, The Antiquity of the Jews. It says, Talking about the Jewish people and the Hasmoneans. Right? And from the time to this, we celebrate this, which we call the Festival of Lights. Because, I imagine, beyond our hopes, this rite was brought to light. And so this name was placed on the festival.

So here Josephus emphasizes not necessarily the dedication of the temple in the first century as the reasoning behind Hanukkah, but being able to worship freely once again because that was something that was taken from them. No real mentions of miracles taking place like 2 Maccabees. Slight variation of Judah Maccabees' deathbed speech. But he calls it what? He refers to it as the Festival of Lights. And historically, we don't see that name anywhere else. So this was a tradition that came about a little bit later. The Festival of Lights. And look, he has no idea why they even call it that. Because I imagine, beyond our hopes, this rite was brought to light. And so this name was placed on the festival.

The fact that their hope to be able to reconvene in the temple of God and worship freely, that hope in the time of darkness was brought in like a shining burst of light. Yes, I'd imagine that's why, probably why we call it the festival of lights. He has no idea, but in his writings. I love the humanity in reading ancient texts, even that in scripture when we have the biblical authors, like they're totally real with, I love it, I love it.

Empires Up and Down

And so we have all of this taking place empires up and down, and up and down and we finally come to this place where Yeshua is born into this environment and he's born into an

environment where the people there for generations have not known freedom they have not known what it's like to have a king since David and Solomon that was righteous collecting all of Israel together All a down-here spiral. You have Josiah, that was a good one, but kept going down until they went into exile in Babylon. And then in Babylon, the Persians came in and took over, and now they rule them. And then the Greeks came in, and now they rule them. And then they have this itty-bitty glimpse of independence through the Maccabees, but that goes south rather quickly to the point where they ask the Seleucid Empire to come back and rule over them because their own kings are too brutal. And then the Romans come in and establish their own governors, King Herod over the land.

Can you imagine if that was your heritage? Your heritage has been defined by centuries of nothing but being oppressed and brutalized and being subhuman. And then in a field, a bunch of boys look up And a veil between heaven and earth is being ripped open by the army of God as they're screaming and celebrating and singing at the top of their lungs that the king, the king is here. The king is here and he's born in Bethlehem and he's in a feeding trough. Kings aren't laid down in feeding troughs. That's not what the kings of empires do, but this is a different type of king. This is why so many people were upset when Yeshua started teaching like non-violence and loving your enemy is no no that's not how we're gonna that's not how you play empires it's not how you play that you have to play by these rules exploitation manipulation enslaving people violence show a force grasp of power Those are the things that make empire. This is the thing that defeats everyone else. The top dog is the top dog through these means. And Yeshua says, no, that's backwards. That's upside down to the kingdom of God. We're going to do it another way.

The Heritage of Oppression

But that's the type of past the people were coming from. That's why Yeshua, when he started speaking on the mount, it was awesome in one aspect, but also very confusing for another, to help you understand that. Later on, we know that the Jewish wars took place. The Jewish zealots, rebel Jews, if you will, they tried to do the same things that happened in the Maccabees twice in the first century. And both times were failure. After the second time, the Romans came in and said, you know what, enough of you. They destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD. They burned down the temple, exiled everyone away from Jerusalem. Another couple centuries later, the Sanhedrin, kind of the Supreme Court that was still orchestrating Israel, they were disbanded and exiled. And essentially, the Jews were kicked out of Israel through Rome.

The Talmudic Era and Reinterpretation

And this started a time known as, I guess you could say, the Talmudic era. This is the time when traditions, the Mishnah, had already started to be written. And now the commentary of the Mishnah, the Talmud, was being written and put together. And for the following centuries, a way to preserve Jewish identity in these books. And in these books, we have a mention of Hanukkah, several hundred years after Israel was thrown out of Israel again. Everybody still with me? Okay.

In the section pertaining to Sabbath, 21b, it speaks about this little mention of Hanukkah. And we're going to see a tradition that has formed, but a reorbit of what Hanukkah was centered around during this time of Jewish history. When the Greeks entered the temple, they defiled all of the oils therein. And when the Hasmonean dynasty prevailed against them and defeated them, they made search and found only one cruise of oil, which they lay with a seal of the high priest." Verse 1.

So here we have a time going from the rededication of the temple to remembering the miracles of God to coming to a place where now it's about freedom and liberation, 150 years later or 200 years later. And now we have, 300 to 500 years after that, we have a different lens of, in Jewish history, what the day was supposed to be about.

A Festival Reborn

And notice here, it's not about revolution. It's not about revolting and bucking an oppressive government. Why? Why? Because in this time period of Jewish history, they've already been stomped, if you will, and exiled by the oppressive. They were defeated. So the orbit wasn't really encouraging to celebrate that every single year, right? Yeah, the ones who revolted and actually did it, and we didn't. And so it appears that it changed, and it changed focus, and not necessarily in a bad way.

But a story of a miracle came about. Likely never happened. We don't know. Likely never happened because it was added so long after. Not about revolution, not about freedom, not about dedication. You know what? We're going to hold on to the only thing we can, and that is God is still there. So this day is going to celebrate God's miraculous power in our midst through this story of oil that lasted eight days. And from there, it began to evolve based on that and God's light penetrating whatever situation we may be in, despite what it is, knowing that God has the power. God is here. He's still in control, and he can do miracles, and he will push the

darkness away. And that's kind of a survey. I don't know if that was beneficial or not for going to Hanukkah, but that's kind of a survey of the aspects of Hanukkah coming together.

Lights and Religious Resistance

And it's just interesting. But the major themes, again, are kind of a combination of all of these things: resisting oppression of religious rights, fighting back when someone forced their religion onto you. And somehow, lights become associated with it—lights. Josephus mentions lights. I don't even know why it's called that, and then later, Jewish tradition: lights from the lampstand. I like that, and that should be a familiar idea for us, right, as believers? This whole thing about light shining in darkness—who said that? Why is that familiar to us? That was a teaching of Yeshua on the Sermon on the Mount, right?

The Salt and Light Teaching

And I'm going to use this as an excuse to go to the Sermon on the Mount. So Yeshua's speaking. He's going up as the new Moses on the mount, receiving and teaching the revelation of God. And he comes down from the mount and does 10 miracles instead of 10 tablets. That's how Matthew frames it. Here's what he says in [Matthew 5](#), verse 13:

"You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It's no longer good for anything. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, what's the rest say? Let your light shine before others, so that—why? They may see your good works and give glory to—who? God, who is in heaven."

Let your light shine. How? Your works. By doing something to instigate the power of God to be reflected off of you into the world—the love of God to be reflected off of you into the world—the patience, mercy, and forgiveness of God to run through you to hit others.

Being a Vessel for God's Love

One of the most impactful things someone ever taught me is a dear friend of mine, my mentor, Jason Price. And he taught me the concept that people can still feel God's love through you even if you're not serious about it, even if you don't want to give it, even if you don't like it. If you serve someone else with intentionality, showing that you're willing to do it, even when on the inside you don't want to do it, they can't help but feel something. They're going to feel

something. The idea is that they're going to feel some type of love from you. But how are they feeling love from you if you didn't feel the love coming from you? Oh, they felt love going through you to them. I know that's really spiritual. I think that's exactly what we're called to do.

We are the images of God—His hands and feet, right? When people see us, the ambassadors of Yeshua, that's what they're supposed to feel—His example. Of course, his example was taking the trash out when you don't want to, but your wife's asking you to. "I don't want to." But you do it. No—you get up, you show value, you take the trash out. You don't want to do that stupid trash. Your wife will feel love, and it's not your love she's feeling. It's God's love flowing through you. I really love that concept, and I think it's absolutely scriptural.

How Light Shines in Darkness

That is how we let our light shine—through doing things, our works—so that people would see them. And this is how light shines and pushes darkness away. They give glory to God, not you, because you're just the vessel.

And what's the setup for this statement? This is important. The setup for this statement is the Beatitudes that take place right before this. This is the coding of how our works should be felt. You ready? The Beatitudes:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."

Meek. It's kind of like humble, but I guess a better phrase for meek would be non-aggressive. Blessed are those who put the sword in the sheath and refuse to be aggressive. Gentle. Meek. They are the ones that will rule—not the empire, right? They will inherit the earth.

Everybody meek in here? We're good? We understand the meek, right? We're good. Okay.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness."

So, righteousness—we can put it in the scriptural context, where righteousness always comes as the sister to justice. So those who seek true justice and righteousness in the world, they will be filled.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see..."

Pure in heart. Those whose hearts are searching for only what God wants to be done and not their own intentions—not corruption, not vanity.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God."

Peacemakers. The ones who are not aggressive. The ones who are merciful. Pure in heart. Hunger to see justice revealed. This is how Yeshua taught to be a light. This is what it looks like to be conformed in his image.

And that's tough. That's tough. Because I don't always like to be meek. The way of empire is individualistic as well. We like to get ahead however we can. And that usually comes through making judgments about other people and raising yourself up above them so that you can somehow justify exploiting them to get whatever you want. And it's hard to do that when you're meek. It's hard to do that. With the corruption in the world and the way the world teaches us to be, it's hard to have a pure heart without vanity, without corruption in your gain. A thirst for righteousness? Well, as long as I can define that, I'm good, right? I'm good. There's a need for justice we all see. Yes, we need to do that. And there's another need for justice, but I don't view it as justice. I don't like that. It's tough.

Centuries of Oppression: What Messiah Would Come?

How are we doing at being his light to the world? Can you imagine? Imagine being in so much conflict in your life and your heritage, your people's heritage, generation after generation after generation. Babylon, Persia, Greece, Greece again, Greece again, Greece again, Rome—and you're fighting against them every single generation. And then you win, but your leadership ends up betraying you, and assassinations take place among the leadership, and everyone's trying to grasp for power. Rome comes in, they own you now. Then centuries of nothing but oppression. What kind of Messiah do you expect to come?

Riding a tank with an AK-47. Sword coming out of his mouth. I want a black rifle coming. I want an AR-15 coming out of his mouth, spouting off fire. That's the kind of Messiah that we would expect to come.

And then this teacher stands up and says: No, be meek. No aggression. Be patient. Kind. Endure. Be the light to the world. Who's light? God's light to the world.

Three Schools of Jewish Thought

Josephus, again, tells us a little bit about the aftermath of Hanukkah. Remember, I mentioned that the Greeks were still in control and they appointed high priests that were not legitimate.

How do you think that made the people feel? Especially those who were zealous for the Torah and his covenant.

We have the temple, and we know how things are supposed to go in the temple. But now they're coming in and establishing a high priest. And now the high priest is being made synonymous with the king of Israel. Because Israel really doesn't have a king as long as they're overseen by an empire, right? They're not independent, right? So now the high priest becomes synonymous with king. So the high priest is now the ruler throughout the generations leading up to Rome taking over.

How would that make you feel? I'm trying to give an example. Imagine if the US got occupied by Russia and they put a Russian president in. I don't know, that's a bad example because this was more religious in its nature.

But you get the idea. We might feel jaded. I mean, we're already oppressed, and now it's like insult to injury—you're controlling us and now you're placing someone in there? Yeah.

And now you have an illegitimate high priest being installed, and it caused a lot of waves. And Josephus mentions throughout all of this drama and chaos that's going on in Judea for the Jewish people, there are about three main schools of thought that formed from this—different philosophies, different groups of people.

Some of them sound familiar. He says one of them was known as the Pharisees, representing the ideals of the common people. There was also the Sadducees—more of the elite, wealthy, if you will, rulership. And then a third group known as the Essenes. Anyone ever heard of the Essenes before? A couple?

Essenes. Neat little group. He writes about the Essenes as being a really small group, and most of them had a great reputation. They were awesome people. They kind of traveled throughout the cities, here and there, but they called no city their own home. They despised wealth. They felt like we all needed to be one in common with all people, so they shared everything. He makes specific mention: when youth come to school, they give their funds away to ensure their education. It's all one common fund. Crazy.

They always strive to wear white clothes. They show mercy and love to everybody, loving your neighbor as yourself. It seems kind of familiar, right? There's a lot of articles written about the overlap between early believers and some of the philosophy of the Essenes. Not all of it, but just some of it, right? It just kind of riffs together.

They lived throughout the cities, again, but not a huge group. And these were common—these were the common Essenes. There was also a group of sectarian Essenes, Essenes that were different. So you had the regular Essenes, and then you had the fundamentalistic cult Essenes, we'll call them. And these guys, they moved out to the wilderness and created their own city, their own town of people.

The Qumran Community

Why? Because they didn't trust the government. We know an Essene community split off and created a community at a place called Qumran. Name may sound familiar, that's where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, right? And many of those scrolls had to do with this community. They preserved the scrolls. It was actually a blessing for sure. But they were known as the Kumon communities. Out in the middle by the Dead Sea, middle of nowhere. We set up our own. And these guys, they disagreed with the placement of the illegitimate high priest in the temple. And so they said, you know what? It's all corrupt. Forget it all. You guys are wrong. You're pagan. And God hates you because you are not obedient to him. This is how they write. But he loves us, and he's coming back for us any moment right now, and he's going to save us, and his wrath will be poured out onto you in such a biblical manner that they're going to make movies about it one day. That's the attitude. That's the attitude.

And so we are leaving, and we're going to go start our own off-grid community up, and you're not invited. They write about their founding teacher. No one knows who that is, but this was apparently the cult leader, the guy who stirred everyone up and said, you know what, guys, we need to be set apart, more set apart than all of this, and go out and do this. And so they called their teacher in their writings the teacher of righteousness. And they called their adversary the priest of wickedness or the wicked priest and this is how we believe we're pretty sure this is one of the pieces of evidence that they segregated because of the whole priest thing—is a wicked priest in there. That's not a legitimate priest. We're going out. Yeah, that's about right. These guys went off-grid claiming everyone else in the world was lost, didn't know the truth. They were mad because they thought they had the true religious calendar by the way. They were mad that no one wanted to follow their calendar and no one else wanted to follow it. And they had an ultra, ultra, ultra strict set of rules and regulations surrounding their community to further set apart themselves. They saw themselves as the true temple of God where his presence could reside. And it was an exclusive thing. And they thought the day of the Lord was coming at any minute. And so they actually lived their lives apocalyptically.

Twisting Scripture

And they weren't wrong about the high priest. Like, things went south. And they weren't wrong that everyone else may have struggled with sin outside of their community. Of course, and they weren't wrong about specific accusations that they made. And they actually took the Bible and it seems their commentary on the Bible stripped all historical context away from the Bible, and they use the prophecies to speak directly about them. In Habakkuk, it talks about the righteous, and they said, well, yeah, that's us. We're the righteous. And it talks about in Habakkuk the wicked nations that are opposed, and they're like, yeah, that's the wicked priest and all of them over there in Israel. It was just, yeah. We do that all the time. Do we? Do we ever manipulate the Bible to kind of bolster or justify a reality that we want to exist about us? Do we? No, we never use the Bible like that. Social security cards came out. Mark of the Beast. Bible says it. That's about us right now. What was the one that was four, eight years ago? Yeshua says, I saw Satan fall from heaven as lightning. And the Hebrew word for lightning is barak. Barak. It is just complete and utter nonsense and an embarrassment, but we just do it. We do it because we want something to be true, and so we will ravage the Word of God to make it so. And the Qumran community did what we're all accustomed to doing. So the Qumran community existed waiting for doomsday to happen as they esteemed themselves as holy and accused everyone else as being wicked.

Hanukkah in the New Testament

Oh, Hanukkah. We'll come back around. Hanukkah is also mentioned in the New Testament. And yes, that transition was supposed to be abrupt. Hanukkah is mentioned in the New Testament in John chapter 10, starting in verse 22, where we see Yeshua at the temple that was rededicated by the Hasmoneans during Hanukkah. And it says this: The Jews who were there gathered around him saying, how long will you keep us in suspense whether you are the king that is going to come, the Messiah that is actually going to bring salvation to the people? Tell us plainly. And this also gives you a better sense of why people were upset because the salvation they were seeking wasn't going to heaven. It was just to be free and saved from the oppression of the powers of the world. Something that they had just been hammered, hammered, hammered generation after generation. And he had something much bigger in mind. And here we have Yeshua at Hanukkah at the temple, which is neat. And the Jews there were waiting, wanting him to tell them whether he's the Messiah or not. And this has been the theme of John for the past four or five chapters. Constantly challenging Yeshua to identify himself. Are you the one?

Yeshua at the Feasts

In [John 7](#), Yeshua goes to the Feast of Tabernacles, where the same thing happens. Who are you? And he says, you know who I am, and you know where I'm from. Cryptic, just to make them mad. And they try to grab him in [John 7](#) at Sukkot, but not one of them could because his time had not yet come. And then others said in [John 7](#), 31, when the Messiah comes, will he perform more signs than these? So he's performing signs and the people are like, I mean, is there really who else could be the Messiah but him? All these signs are happening. Then on the last great day of Sukkot, in John, he stands up during the water ceremony and says, all who are thirsty, come unto me, drink living water. Who is this guy? They try to seize him and grab him again, but no one could lay a hand on him.

The Blind Man and Works of Light

Then in chapter 9, we have a miracle. This is the chapter before Hanukkah. We have a miracle in chapter 9, and it's of the blind man. And so Yeshua comes, and he decides to spit in some dirt to make mud. And when you grow up with this story, it's like not a big deal, right? Like that seems totally normal. And I'm just wondering what the ratio was here? And the guy's like, yeah, what's going on? And then he goes and tells him, wash it off, right? And the man is healed. And they begin to question, like, what did this man do to deserve to be blind? Sin, what happened? And here's what Yeshua says, and this is why it's relevant. Neither this man nor his parents sinned, said Jesus, but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. So works, doing something, being present, are associated with the light of God being the light of the world going out. As long as it is a day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

So here we have Yeshua taking on the language that he told us to be and actually walking it out. This is everything that builds up to chapter 10 when he goes to Hanukkah. The same temple that was rededicated to God 180 years before this, the same temple that Yeshua claims to be the fulfillment for, that John emphatically asserts, which is neat, right? It's here that the Jews come around and ask him this. The Jews were there, and they were gathered around him. Hanukkah, how long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly. And Yeshua answered, I did tell you, but you didn't believe me. The works that I do in my Father's name testify about me. Again, his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him. But Yeshua said to them, I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?

His Works Identify Him

Over and over and over again, Yeshua says that his works are what will identify him as the king of Israel. The light of God that sheds through him, impacting those around him. That is what's going to establish his kingship over Israel. The works he does in the Father's name. And that's so significant because didn't Yeshua say something about our works back in the Mount of Olives? Not the Mount of Olives, Sermon on the Mount. His identity as God's chosen is manifested by his works. And he says our identity as God's chosen is identified by our good works. And when people see our good works, they will turn to God. They will give God the glory. And there's a deeper context to that, but we're going to try to make this a little bit more applicable. I'm going to go a different direction.

Presence Over Isolation

People can't see your good works when we aren't there. Yeshua was in the city with the sinners. Yeshua was there when the woman accused of adultery was thrown on the ground and stones were picked up. Yeshua was there when the blind man needed to be healed. Yeshua was there when a little girl was just sleeping. Yeshua was there when Zacchaeus, the chief crooked sinner, worst sinner, was in the hell of his own making, a career of exploiting the poor and getting rich off of it. The encounter that saved him would have never taken place if Yeshua was not there. No one can see your works if you, just like the sectarian Essenes, make yourself into an idol and run away and isolate yourself all while telling everyone else that they're wicked and they're pagan and they're going to hell and God is about to return at any moment to save you and unleash his wrath on them. Twisting the Bible so it suits your agenda and dividing yourself from everyone but for the pettiest of reasons.

Being Present Means Staying

And it's so fascinating because Yeshua mentions the Pharisees and he mentions the Sadducees. He even throws the scribes in there. He never once mentions this group of sectarian Essenes out in the wilderness. Not even once. Too far gone? I don't know. I just find that striking.

Yeshua calls us to be present because being present is when God chooses to work through us. And that means being around people you may not like. That means being around people you may disagree with. That means embracing fellowship with your enemies. That means dismounting from your high horse of pride and arrogance—that we have some type of divine

knowledge of truth, and therefore everyone else is dumb because God loves me more. It means getting off that horse.

And we have such an attitude nowadays, and it's an attitude from an ancient spirit, the same spirit that the Qumran community had within them—that we have to become tribal in order to feel value in God's eyes. And I'm here to tell you that the labels that you give yourself, the labels that I give myself, the identifiers you use to feel separate from everyone else—God does not base his value of you on such petty things. He does not.

We are called to have wisdom while we are present with the people that God put in our lives to be present with. Who have we carved out of our life because of a barrier that we created in the name of God?

God's Plan: Community for All

The desire of God from the biblical story is he wants a community. And it's not just a community of Israel. Isaiah prophesies that Egypt and Assyria will be part of his community, equal to Israel, his beloved. The enemies? Yeah, because the plan is always to have the whole world in his.

God desires to have a community. Creation—why? Why creation? Because he wants a community of mankind. Mankind messed up. Okay, he calls Abraham. Why did he call Abraham? Why? So that one day he can be in community with all nations. And that's the plan. That's the rescue plan through Abraham. Why the Messiah? So that all can be one with God as he is one with God. That's Yeshua's prayer in [John 17](#): "I don't just pray for my disciples here. I pray for all those out there that they would be one with you as I am one with you."

Part of that community. But yet we find value in finding ways to cut that community down to something so small that conveniently only us and a few other select people dwell within. And that's just something that needs to stop.

The Call to Stay and Be Light

Meek, humble, kind, peacemaker. This is how God's reign goes forth. And so he calls us to stay, to stay. In [Jeremiah 29](#), he told the exiles in Babylon, pagan place of oppression. He said, listen: pray for the well-being of your city that you're in, plant gardens, celebrate life the way that you know it to be through me, so that you can be an example. Don't just yearn to escape—no, no.

And I don't know what that means for your situation—so many different situations—but this is your chance to not try to convert people, every single person you meet, not to try to tell people they're wrong, every single person you meet, not to try to correct every single person you meet, not to come across as trying to be their savior by telling them all of your doctrine and what you believe. No, that's not it. This is your chance to connect with people like Yeshua did and says to do. All that other stuff comes later. But this is how it's done.

Peacemaker, humble, meek, willing to endure. And that does not look like a self-fulfilling prophecy where you're the victim in a situation you created, by the way. No, it means to endure past where you would not normally go. And maybe it's with your family. And maybe it's with your friends. And maybe it's with certain people.

If we are called to be the light of what Yeshua has and is going to be doing within us, then we're called to be present with people. Maybe you've acted more like the Qumran community member than you have a follower of Christ. I sure have in the past, absolutely. I have so many regrets about my past of wanting to be a Qumranite. So many regrets because it's just too tempting to cut people off so you can feel holier.

Darkness and Winter Light

Darkest time of the year right now—winter, winter. I don't like it when the sun doesn't come out. Anyone else? It's not great, it messes with me. Past few days, cloudy, gray. Gosh, my mom takes care of me. She bought me one of those—a daylight lamp. You turn it on and it shines daylight. I'm holding it to my face. People struggle with the darkest time of the year. It's not just you.

Historically, if we step outside the box—why do you think every single culture in history has a winter festival? Yeah, get happy, do something, party, get together. Don't just sit in your huts and dart, right? Every single nation and culture, even Israel, Hanukkah. Notice how it switched throughout history.

Dedication of the light. A miracle. What miracle of the oil? Listen, it's a miracle of oil that happened because of light. That conveniently showed up there. Light. Man, I love that. And it's just so fascinating to me. What a time to be light. What a time.

Old School Messianic Circles

In old school messianic circles—this is when I was, I guess you could call it, Torah terrorists, Qumran community—so back in the early 2000s and the 90s, the messianic movement was crazy. Yeah, we got some OGs here, yes, for sure. Crazy, because the messianic movement—if I can be blunt—many people got on board with it, not because they felt like God was calling them to a more intimate insight of truth in the scriptures, but because it was a way they could learn things that ended up not even being true so that they could feel more righteous than other people.

People with church hurt found a way—through misinformation of church history—to throw stuff back at the church that hurt them in the past. And for me, one of those things was Christmas. That was the big target, especially in the early 2000s.

The Hislop Conspiracy and Christmas Debates

There's a debate on certain aspects of Christmas—maybe coming from older cultures and so on and so forth—that didn't serve God. But at the time, there was a book that was being promoted that was written in the 1800s by a man by the name of Alexander Hislop who literally fabricated fake history of ancient gods to make the Catholic church look bad because he was part of the Free Scottish Church. He didn't like them.

So he wrote a book before Egyptology really took off, before we discovered the tablets of Rathshamra, before we discovered the Nuzi tablets, the Babylonian tablets, tablets archaeology that showed us what ancient Babylon and Egypt and Ugaritic community, like what all of Mesopotamia actually believed about their gods, right? We hadn't discovered this in depth yet. This man made up a bunch of stuff and basically said, "This is what produced Christmas and Easter and everything the Catholics do. But nothing that my church does." It's hilarious. It's never been taken seriously. And when we discovered all these things, it was discredited.

But the early messianic movement, man, this was our new Bible. Because again, we liked sensational stuff that made us feel powerful. And one of those things was like, "If you say Merry Christmas to somebody, God hates you. You're an idol worshiper." Or if you like lights, or if you put up lights—even Hanukkah lights—it's too close to Christmas, you're an idol worshiper.

Criticisms of Consumer Christmas and Regret

And don't get me wrong, I have criticisms of Christmas, especially American Christmas. It has trained us—the entire American culture—to be consumers, to be greedy, and to be discontent and not have gratitude, despite all the little Scrooge stories. We're not grateful. Everyone's

getting all this stuff. It's time to buy, time to get in debt, time to show our kids all these presents, time for us to be jealous because we feel like we're entitled to a bunch of stuff but not value the things that we have. That's what we've been taught. It's part of our economy. That's how our economy thrives—through that type of attitude.

So I definitely have criticisms of Christmas and don't do Christmas. That's fine, whatever. But I'm just saying, at that time, that's what was used. And I used that as a way to stab my friends, make them feel belittled, make them feel unloved by me. And I saw families ripped apart by it for no reason, I feel.

The Woman's Regret

And so the reason why I bring that up is because recently, two weeks ago, I had a woman come to me for counsel. And she started crying. And I said, "What's going on?" And she said, "I've been part of stuff—part of the Messianic Movement, I guess, for a little while. And I've studied all the stuff that I learned from the Messianic Movement and all the sensational stuff. And I know what's history and what's fact. And I know what's sensational—it's just made up. And that's fine."

But I just remembered her dad had passed away. And she said, "I just remembered that Christmas was my dad's favorite part of the year. And I have these regrets because I made him feel like he was bad for wanting to spend time with me on a special day that was valuable to him, where he celebrated the birth of Yeshua—Christmas tree, presents, whatever. It was a day that he valued and was special to him, and all he wanted were his sons and daughters to come and spend the day with him.

"And I made him feel like God didn't love him. I made him feel like I was more righteous than him—and he was bad, and he was a bad example to me. And I have so many regrets because, having now actually studied all this stuff, I would totally go back and eat dinner with him on Christmas Day."

Your Mom's Going to Die

If he wanted to give me a present, I would accept a present from my dad, especially now that I can't. And it really, really hit me because I've lost my dad. And although that wasn't a scenario with my dad, I remember after holding my dad's hand after he passed away, I walked over to the hospital window in shock, looking outside, and I was a little jaded because everyone's still driving to work. It's so funny how we think, why aren't you all stopping? You don't understand

what just happened. But in reality, what I was looking at was a whole new world. I had entered a whole new world where my dad wasn't there anymore.

And I want to tell you guys something. Your mom's going to die. Your dad's going to die. Your grandparents are going to die. Your family is going to die. Your friends. And hopefully your parents and grandparents are going to pass away before you do. Do not unwisely create barriers that you will regret later in life. And Christmas is just one of many examples. We love to draw lines in the sand that are way too deep. I'm not saying you got to celebrate Christmas. But I'm saying if you don't believe in Christmas, but your mom and dad would love to give you a gift or to invite you over for dinner, don't miss the value of connecting with the community that God gave you known as your family, because there are values, and I personally don't think God's going to be proud of you for not having dinner with your family while they celebrate the advent of Yeshua.

Where Are the People That Need Your Light?

Meekness, peacemaker, patience, kindness, a thirst for justice and righteousness. Where are the people that need your light? Where are you willing to go so that they see your light? I'm not talking about compromise. I'm not talking about going to strip clubs. I know people are reaching, but what about, I want to stay in Qumran? No, go to Jerusalem, no matter how corrupt it is, and stand to reflect the light of Yeshua. Because that's what God has empowered you to do, allegedly, with this all-powerful, amazingly potent, authoritative Holy Spirit that he says is dwelling with you and giving you the wisdom and power to actually do that. But we feel comfortable. We feel comfortable when it's just a remnant. And so we're called to be the light of the world, however that looks like.

And so, yeah, that was the way I somehow connected Hanukkah to the Mount of Olives, to the Sermon on the Mount. I don't know if it was kosher or not. But that's what Hanukkah reminds me of, and the struggle of how Jewish history developed its meaning and origin. You know, when it comes down to it, the light. And how does Yeshua tell us to be the light? And that changes in different seasons of life. It changes with different relationships. But you are strong enough. You're strong enough to be where God wants you to be so that community is built, peace is shown, and his authentic connection of love and companionship and community is felt.

The Festival of Lights

And I don't know where that is for you, and I don't claim to, but I think everyone in here knows a situation where God's calling them to be the light. So be the light of the world. Do not put it under a bushel. Do not hide it. Push inward and build the community and relationships that Yeshua intended. Why? Because we call this festival the Festival of Lights. Because our hope was brought to light. And maybe there's something stopping you from that today. What an appropriate season of life to push that away into an act of rededication of who God's called you to be.

[John 1:5](#) says, the light shines into darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it. That is the weapon that you have at your disposal. So use it.

Closing Prayer

Avinu malkeinu, our Father, our King, we thank you for this opportunity to come together in your name. We thank you for the demonstration of what the light of the world looks like, King Yeshua. And we ask in his name that you would empower us, activate this Holy Spirit that you say gives life and nothing but life, that is within us now, that has power and authority to overcome all darkness, that we would not only allow it to consume and push out all darkness within us, but that it would shoot outward. And you would give us the wisdom to navigate how that looks and how that's felt.

Father, if there is anyone here today that finds himself at a place where maybe they feel like the old temple, that they would know, all it takes, all it takes is submission to you, a rededication to say, Father, I give this to you and I'm ready to take a step, a step that only you can help me take. We thank you, Father, in the name of Yeshua we pray. Amen.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one. Blessed is the name of His glorious kingdom for all of eternity. May the Lord bless you and may He keep you. May the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up His countenance toward you and give you His shalom, His peace. Hallelujah. Shabbat shalom. Thank you, Father. Shalom.

Closing

We pray this message has blessed and encouraged you and your relationship with God, and we hope that it has made the Bible more beautiful in your life. Founded in Truth Fellowship exists to build a community that bears the image of God and lives the redeemed life only Yeshua gives. If this message has blessed you, or if you see God working in and through this ministry, we

invite you to prayerfully consider partnering with us so that the message of Yeshua and the truth of God's word continues to reach all nations.

If you would like to take part in this mission, then you can do so at [foundedintruth.com slash give](https://foundedintruth.com/give), or you can scan the QR code on the screen. These offerings go toward providing resources for both our local fellowship as well as our online ministry, but also our many outreach ministries, including our foster care and adoption ministry, local charity outreach ministry, our international online children's ministry, and any future ministries that the Lord would allow us to walk through and walk in to impact the world around us with his love and blessing, and the bold proclamation of the gospel of King Yeshua.

We thank you for your continued support and we look forward to seeing you next time. Shalom.

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