

Jesus and Hanukkah – The Good Shepherd vs The Maccabees

Matthew Vander Els • 2021-11-27 • foundedintruth.com

MAIN VERSES

[John 10:22](#) • [John 10:31](#) • [John 10:26](#) • [1 Samuel 16:4](#) • [1 Samuel 16:13](#) • [Psalm 95:6](#) • [Psalm 95:7](#) • [John 10:36](#) • [John 1:1](#) • [John 1:18](#) • [John 1:14](#) • [John 6:3](#) • [John 6:31](#) • [John 6:35](#) • [John 7:11](#) • [John 7:37](#)

Opening Worship

Shabbat Shalom! Welcome to Founded in Truth Fellowship! Let's rise! Shema Yisrael Ha'ai Bukhshan. Give thanks to the Lord. Proclaim his name. Declare his works to all the peoples, so they remember his exalted name. Sing to Adonai, for he has done gloriously. Let this be known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel. Hallelujah. Amen.

Father, we thank you. We bless you. We give you praise this morning. You are our delight, and we are grateful for your presence among us.

Oh, come behold the works of God, the nations at his feet. He breaks the bow and bends the spear and tells the wars to cease. Mighty one of Israel, you are on our side. We walk by faith. Thank God who burns the chariots with fire!

Sing it again. O come, behold the word of the nations that is faithful and bends the spear and tells the wars to cease. O mighty one of Israel, you are on our side. Walk by faith in God who burns the chariots with fire. With us in the forest as a shelter. With us in the snow. With us as a shelter, with us in the storm, with the Lord. When the oceans roar, you are the Lord of all, who calms the wind and waves and makes my heart be still.

Though the earth gives way, the mountains move into the sea, the nations rage—I know my God is in control. Yes, he is. Though the oceans roar and in waves and make my heart be still. So the earth gives way, the mountains move. The nations rage, my God is in control. With us in the shelter. With us in the storm. Though the oceans roar, you are the Lord of all, the one who calms the wind and still. So the earth gives way, the mountains move into the sea. The nations

reach—I know my God is in control. Declare it! Though the oceans roar, though the oceans roll, you are my heart. So the earth gives way. The nations are in control.

We praise you, Father. Hallelujah, Father! You are with us. You are with us in the battle. You are great and mighty, Father.

Holy, Holy, Holy

Holy, holy, holy in this place. Splendor and majesty. Splendor and majesty. Strength unto your name, Ancient of days. Holy. We tremble for your throne. Our hearts we come and adore for your glory. The Lord's world. Great is the Lord. Great is the Lord. Splendor and might. Strength unto your name, Ancient of day. Holy. We tremble before. We come and glory's worth. Worthy, worthy you are. Holy crowned in majesty. Holy crowned in majesty. We worship you in the morning, in the evening. I will sing, I will shout. You are worth the more. I will shout it out in the evening. I will shout it out. Praise, praise the Lord. Most worthy, most worthy. You are majesty. You are majesty. We worship you. Worship you. You're crowned in majesty, Father. We give you praise.

We stand in your throne room this morning, Father. We worship you. You are holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty. We worship you. Yeshua is Israel. Make in this place. I stand your spirit all, all going down. You are holy, holy.

You Walk Into the Room

Gentle love can be closer, closer still. Yeshua, you're to your world, to your heaven. Singing along and the angels sing it below. And you'll be ever the king—sing holy, below my throne is the king is right now making this place holy.

Walk into the room. Everything changes. Darkness starts to tremble at the light that you bring. You walk into the room. Every heart starts burning. And nothing matters more than just to sit here at your feet and worship you. We worship you. Sing we love you. Love you. Love you, Yeshua. We love you, and we can't get enough. This is for you, Yeshua. Yeshua.

Into the room. Sickness starts to vanish. Every situation changes. When you come, the dead begin to rise, 'cause there's a resurrection like you. Ever stop? Can't miss this. You should never stop. This is for you. Sing it out to him this morning.

We Give You Permission

We want you, consume God. We give you permission. Our hearts are yours. We want you. We want all we are. We give you permission. Our hearts are yours. We want you, consume God. All we are. We give you permission. Our hearts are yours. We want you, God. All we are. We give you permission. Our hearts are yours. We want you.

Just invite him. Invite him into your personal space this morning. Let him deal with you. Let him speak to your heart. He wants all of you, not part. Let's sing that again.

Let This Be a Place

Oh, let this be a place where you long to come as we make a way for your love. Let these hands be clean and this heart be pure, blameless as the bride you're coming for. It's the power of the presence that changes us, your glory all around us.

And let this be a house where you long to stay. Ever will you meet face to face, abandoned here before you. We want nothing but just to be with you and you alone. Presence that changes us, your glory all around us. Spirit again that changes us. Fall afresh on us. Fall afresh on us. Oh, fall afresh on us. Fall afresh on us. Fall afresh on us. Fall afresh on us. We invite you, Father. Fall afresh on us. Fall afresh on us. Fall afresh on us. Fall afresh on us.

No Wonder the Angels Adore You

Every time you give me another reason to love you. Every time I look at you, I'm changed. Never the same. No. Oh, never the same. No wonder the angels adore you. No wonder creation bows before you. No wonder the angels cry holy. Day and night, night and day. Day and night, night and day. No wonder the angels adore you. No wonder creation bows before you. No wonder the angels cry holy. Night and day, day and night and day.

Holy, holy, holy you are. You are holy, you are. Oh, for the first time I get to say. No wonder the angels adore you. No wonder creation bows before you. No wonder the angels cry holy. Day and night, night and day, day and night and day. No wonder the angels adore you. No wonder creation bows before you. No wonder the angels cry holy. Day and night, night and day, day and night, night and day.

Holy you, you are holy. Holy you are, holy you'll be. You are holy, you are holy. You are holy, O God, O God, O you are holy, you are holy, you are holy, holy, holy, and there you'll be, holy, you are, you'll be, who was and is and is to come. Full of fresh on us. Full of fresh on us.

We Feel Your Presence

We thank you, Father. You are here. We feel your love. You are here, and we feel your love. We thank you, Father. Full of fresh on us. Full of fresh on us. We bless you. We bless you, Abba. We thank you. We feel your presence. We feel your nearness, and it is for our good, Father. Your nearness is to us our good.

I thank you, Father, that you are forever the same. You are the one who was and is and is to come. And forever in eternity, we will bow with all the saints and we will declare, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty who was and is and is to come."

We thank you, Father. We come with hearts of gratitude before you this morning. And I pray, Father, that no one would leave this room unchanged because they have met with the Living God. The power of your presence is in this room. And I thank you that your heart and your intention is for us, and you are with us. We love you, Yeshua. We thank you, and we give you all honor. We give you all praise. You are the only one worthy, and yours is the kingdom forever.

So we bless you, and it is our delight, Father. Continue to speak. Continue to move. Continue to bring the conviction, the encouragement, whatever is needed, Father. We just invite you to continue to do what you want to do with us here in this place today. For your glory and your fame in the earth, we declare it in Yeshua's name. Everybody said amen. Hallelujah! Give him praise. Give him praise. He is worthy, worthy, worthy. Thank you, Abba.

The Torah Portion

You may be seated. Miss Heather Duncan is going to come this morning and bring the word from the Torah. I just thank you and praise you that you are God and none of us are. That alone is enough to praise you all the day.

I thank you for this privilege and this honor to bring the Torah portion today. I ask for you to fill your vessel. You have a word, several of them. You have a word for every person here, and I'm just asking that I be the vessel that you use to deliver it. It is in your son's name, Yeshua HaMashiach. I believe and trust. Amen.

I love this Torah portion. Joseph is one of my favorite Bible characters, but for me he is so much more. Joseph was life-changing for me. The story of Joseph being studied at my kitchen table, just me and God. Because I had reached a point in my life that I did not want...

Anybody else's relationship with God, I wanted my very own. And I wasn't quite sure how that would look, but I just knew that it had to be more. It had to be more than just getting up and

going to church on Sundays. It had to be more than just being a part of the youth group. It had to be more. I just knew that there was more, but I didn't know exactly what my more was.

And then I studied the story of Joseph, not like the cartoon character as a child, but as if I were Joseph. And I had an understanding that I was, that I am. That when God knit me together in my mother's womb, that he had plan and he had purpose for me. And it wasn't vague that it was solidified because everything under the hand of the Almighty, everything we see in creation has purpose. Well, why didn't I think of myself that way? Why didn't I see myself as a treasured, beautiful creation of the Almighty? Why did I not see myself as one that he had placed on the timeframe of the earth's existence for a divine, eternal purpose? Why didn't I see myself the way Joseph understood himself?

See, in the story of Joseph, we see that he was given a dream at the age of 17. And everybody was offended by this dream except for Joseph. What that told me was that God himself had a dream of Heather. That's some powerful thinking. I had never been taught that stuff before. Nobody, nobody in my family said, hey, little girl, God had a dream of you. Nobody had that kind of confidence that I had a purpose and that God Almighty, the creator, designed me redheaded for a purpose. And he made me.

The Two Pits

This first pit was his own making. The second pit—when he's sold to the Ishmaelites and goes to Potiphar's house, where he rises up in command—he doesn't do anything wrong. Nothing. He's running from trouble and still finds himself in a pit. So what does that tell us? That there's going to be some pits that we find ourselves in that we didn't ask for and we don't deserve and it was nothing that we did. It was no punishment from God. It just happened that way. But it had purpose, or the Almighty would not allow it.

In both these pits, Joseph still rises up, right? He becomes high in command when he's in prison. And these dreams have significance, right? Some dreams I have, I need to write them down. And some dreams—I've had encounters with the Almighty in a dream.

The Lamp Dream

I dreamed one time that I was mad. Let me just pull the veil off and tell you: I was really, really mad about something. Fighting mad. It had been a long time since I'd been that mad.

Now, my nickname in high school was Heather Hall Hurricane. Does that tell you anything about my behavior? It was not very good. I was a fighter. I was raised around nothing but boys, and boys don't talk about stuff. They just get to hammering on one another.

In this dream, this event happened, and I got very, very angry. And then I calmed down, and right before I went to bed, I was like, Lord, I just don't understand why I got that mad. Not that level of mad. That wasn't even really worth that level of mad.

So I go to bed, and the Lord comes to me in a dream. And I'm laying in the bed in the dream, and he comes to me, and he's got this lamp in his hand. And it's a lamp like the ten virgins, like a genie-in-the-bottle kind of lamp. And he walks over to me, and he said, Heather, see how I got stood up on a date?

That's the embarrassing part, but I've got to tell it to make the dream complete. It is through our transparency that it helps other people. So I got stood up. Dude wasn't even that cute. That's why I was like, why am I mad?

He comes to me in a dream and he's got this lamp and he said, Heather, the reason you got so angry is because you were anticipating homeboy's arrival.

I didn't think about that. You're right, I did. Got dressed up, put on lipstick, mascara, fixed my hair, hooker heels, asked my friend, do I look good in this? And I was angry because I had taken so much time to get dressed up. I don't normally doll up like that.

So you anticipated homeboy's arrival, and I thought about it. Yeah, you're right. I did. That was it. It's not so much him. It was the anticipation of him coming because I knew that we would have fun together.

He says, Do you anticipate my arrival like that? And I was like, huh. All the oxygen in the room just faded. No, no, I don't. I know you're coming back, but I don't think of it like that. I don't wait in anticipation for your arrival.

He moves just a little bit closer to me and he takes this lamp and moves it from his hand into mine. He says, Better yet, Heather Angel, do you prepare others to anticipate my arrival?

No, that's right, I don't.

Joseph in the Moss Justice Center

Back to our story of Joseph. This story of Joseph is one that I use when I teach life skills in the Moss Justice Center, and it's the one that has changed me so that I present to those girls in

there that have never had anybody tell them about the basics that they are a creation of the Almighty, that they are image bearers, that they were created and designed perfectly by Him for Him.

We get to discuss the pits that they put themselves in, the pits Heather put herself in, and the pits that other people have put us in. And then we do this beautiful chart of how that all works out for our good.

But one of the things we have to clear up is who the Almighty is. Because you're not going to go to a God for comfort if you only see Him as one to condemn you. You're not going to go to a God for direction in your life if you don't know a God that is trustworthy. You're not going to go and ask him to tell you what his dream of you is if you don't trust that the dream he has of you is good.

Knowing God's Name

So we have to clear up his name. When I first started, I would have people say, Heather, did you have anybody get saved today? And I'm like, I didn't do an altar call. And that bothered me. So I go home. And I'm like, Lord, am I supposed to do an altar call after every class? I'm not preaching. I'm teaching. And he's like, Heather, all you got to do is tell them who I am. They can't help but fall in love with me and want to serve me.

So do you know God like that? Do you personally know him to be a God that loves you? And even when some bad stuff happens, that he's got good purpose in it. Do you know a God that would carry you through fire and windstorms and rains? Do you know a God that would allow you to go through some things, not because you did anything to deserve it, but because he could use you through it? Do you know the same God that Joseph knew?

Joseph Didn't Bad Mouth

It's fascinating that Joseph never spoke ill of his brothers. Y'all notice that in the story? Because to me, it doesn't say it. Sometimes you've got to read the Word of God and ask Him to put you in on some things that aren't technically written.

Let me say it like this. If Joseph had talked in smack about his family, when they did come back with their forgiveness, there's no way in the world this king that honored Joseph's position so much would have said, put him in the good land. He would have been offended. You hurt my friends? Y'all go over there and stay. But the fact that they were placed in Goshen, the good

land, is significant. It's a statement that Joseph didn't bad mouth because Joseph understood that everything that God allowed in his life had purpose.

Don't Hijack Somebody Else's Portion

And I love a lot of scriptures, I'll just be honest, but there are two things. One falls in next week's Torah portion, but I get to talk about it anyway because we're not going to be here for next Shabbat. Isn't God cool? Yes. I don't want to hijack somebody else's portion. Oh, isn't that beautiful? Let's stop comparing ourselves to others because we don't want to hijack somebody else's portion. God's got something going on with them that's good when you ain't good. That's okay because you ain't hijacking their portion. He's got His own assigned to you.

What You Meant for Harm, God Meant for Good

So Genesis chapter 50 verse 2, Joseph makes this statement to his brothers: what you meant to harm me, he meant for my good and the saving of many lives. When you're going through some trials, it's okay to say, God, what good purpose does this serve?

And when we trust him and know him to be a God of honor who genuinely loves you—He never questions His decision in your making. He never changed his mind. No matter what you're doing, all those years of Heather frolicking and acting wild and crazy. He didn't change his mind about me. I had to change my mind about him.

Purpose.

So he tells his brothers, what you meant to harm me, God meant for my good. For the saving of many lives.

The gifts that you carry that were knit in you at birth, those are not just for you.

They are for the body. They are for the saving of many lives. I encourage you to study the story of Joseph again and ask the Lord to reveal to you your own Joseph story. An outline of childhood. What happened to you when you were a kid that was good? Not so good. Father God, please tell me, please tell me, what good purpose did that have? It's going to have one for the Father. It's going to have one for the Son. It's going to have one for the Holy Spirit. So you just keep holding in there when you ask the question. You just keep holding in there until you get the answer because He's a good, good God and ain't nothing He wants to withhold from you.

He wants to straighten out some things about you and your life. See, I had a learning disability growing up. I still have it. And I hated myself about that. Just loathed myself. I would get in knots if I had to send an email to somebody because I spell well, didn't get hooked on phonics. Most of the big words I know I've memorized.

Your Joseph Story

And that has been one area that I really didn't like about myself. And I didn't understand why. Lord, if you got me to be a teacher, why can't I spell sophisticated? And along the way, He revealed to me that having that disability created within me this tenacity. Because what would take an average person one time to read a sentence would take me three times. I'd read it the first time and the second, and it was the third time before it flowed. That's quite annoying when you're a kid and everybody else is right.

I will never forget Clark Maxwell. I was at church in the Sunday school class and I was reading my Baptist hymnal pretty choppy and he just snatched it from me and he said, "Give it here. I'll read it. What are you stupid or something? What are you stupid or something? What are you stupid or something?" Got some voices in your head. He wants to clear them up. I ain't stupid. I ain't stupid. But it took me a while to realize I wasn't. It took me a while to realize that a learning disability was just a way to create in me sheer tenacity.

Clearing the Voices

Because it takes tenacity to walk into that Moss Justice Center and say, "Hey, I want to start something here that ain't never been started before." It takes tenacity when you're in your prayer closet. It takes tenacity to be able to move a movement forward. You were created by an almighty God for an almighty purpose. You are a spiritual being walking parallel to two universes at the same time.

It takes tenacity to be a prayer warrior. It takes tenacity to hold on to something. Don't tell me no. Back in my wild days, it was like, "Can I have one more drink?" No. "Oh, don't tell me no." That's not a good thing. So your gifts can be used in a bad way or in the right way, the righteous way. So all these things that have happened have purpose.

When we trust God, we can ask Him and expect those answers that change our relationship with Him and our relationship with others. Other people may have meant to harm you, but God didn't. And it is not only for you, but for others.

Gifts and Purpose

Thank you. That's strange. It was switched on, but still said mute. Devil can't stop this. Newt. All right.

Community Announcements

That wasn't that good. Thank you, Heather, for allowing God to use you in every capacity. Welcome, everybody. Shabbat shalom. Again, welcome, everybody online. Thank you for joining us. I know we have a few families watching from far away, so we miss you guys. Can't wait to see you again soon. Save the date for the Hanukkah party tomorrow, November 28th, guys. We are going to meet right here, 4:30 to 8:30. We're going to attempt to have an outdoor Hanukkah festivity right out there. Maybe we'll come inside if it's too cold. We're going to have food—donuts and hot dogs. Might be some music.

We have table decorating. You've already got the announcement to decorate your car with Hanukkah lights—a little trunk thing. Hanukkah decoration contest is going to be awesome. Ugly sweater contest. We're going to have face painting, food, and more. There's a Fit Facebook page event where you can RSVP at your convenience called Fit Hanukkah Party 2021. Please either do that now or when you get home so we know what to expect. Feel free to bring guests. We will feed them, neighbors, to celebrate this joyous occasion together. Also, please, if you want to sit down, bring a chair.

We also have our Women's Mental Health Support Group. The holidays, guys, can sometimes be isolating and frustrating, can't they? Do any of you feel a little bit down when the winter comes? Some people have seasonal ups and downs. Guys, sometimes the holidays are hard and the season is hard. And if you ladies are in need of just a little bit of support, the Women's Mental Health Support Group will be meeting this coming Thursday at 7 p.m. at Haley Chase's house. If you have any questions, please refer to the Stilled Spirits Facebook page for more information.

We also have the Ladies Bible Study, which won't be meeting this week, but we'll be meeting starting December 8th. We also have our Women's Retreat. Guys, we are still taking registrations for this amazing retreat that is being organized. I know some of you are excited about it. It's going to be March 4th through the 6th at South Mountain Family Camp in Kayser, North Carolina. Our theme this year is Covenantal Beloved, uncovering the fullness of who we are as His creation. This retreat will be two packed days full of teaching, worship, good food,

and fellowship. And we are excited for all that God is putting together and are expecting His mighty move of His Spirit in our midst.

The total for the retreat is only \$100. And that covers six meals, overnight accommodations, grounds, facility use fees, plus a few special surprises. I don't know what those are, but it sounds fun. \$25 non-refundable deposit is due upon registration, with the remaining balance due by February 1st. Don't delay. You don't want to miss out. Come join us. Guys, please contact Ms. Christy Bush at christy@foundedintruth.com for registration information.

Volunteers, guys, if God has given you a heart to serve in any capacity, we could use your help in so many different ways. Please refer to the volunteer sign-up sheet outside. Specific needs are Shabbat breakfast. We need someone to volunteer once every two months to hand out the bagels and clean up afterwards. Nursery—definitely need some more people to sign up for the nursery once every two months. And also in the AV section back there, if you want to learn some skills and how this stuff works, please see Matt. You guys can fill out a volunteer sheet, put it in the offering box, and we will put you to work because we need it. Thank you.

Teen Fellowship. December 4th, please join us for a special Hanukkah party, Hanukkah campfire worship time. This will be at the home of Jason and Tara Gonzalez, who I hope are doing well. Shabbat shalom, guys. We will be roasting hot dogs on the fire and having s'mores. S'more what? I don't know. S'more fun. Some more chocolate and graham crackers in my mouth. Hope to see everybody there. That is part of the youth group. I guess adults can't come.

If Founding Truth has been a blessing to you, we encourage you to consider giving financially to keep us going: livestreaming, in-person meetings, and the events. Everything that we do is because of someone before us who has met that need. And so moving forward, if that's something that you would consider, we'd greatly appreciate it. We love being a blessing that comes at a cost. So thank you so much.

And now we are going to bless the children. So please stand. Every single week we have a tradition of thanking God for the greatest asset He's given to us as a community, which is naturally the next generation. And I need six to eight adults to hold up the chuppah, which has disappeared. Is it back there? You know what? We will make do. Usually we have a chuppah that we hold over the children to represent God's mercy and grace, but someone has moved it. Kids and youth up here. Okay, buddy, I got to put you down.

And in lieu of a chuppah, I would invite everybody to extend their arms symbolically covering our youth and our children, everybody up here. It's such a fire hazard every week, and I'm just so proud of it. It's wonderful. Our arms are going to get tired. This is great. Alvina Malkinu, our

Father, our King, we thank you for this Shabbat, this day of the week that you carved out of creation and given to us as a sign, as a signet of the eternal rest that is only found in your Son Yeshua. I ask that you would bless the young men here as Ephraim and Manasseh, that they'd be fruitful in all their ways, even as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the patriarchs of our faith, that you would instill in them a spirit of mission, a spirit of courage and discernment to carry your banner throughout the generation. And the young ladies here, I ask that you would bless them as Rachel and as Leah, Sarah and Rebecca, that they would have wisdom and discernment, that they would be bold warriors for your kingdom throughout their generation. And the youth, Father, I ask that you would place upon them the same spirit, the same vision, the same courage, the same boldness as Joshua and Caleb, the spies that ran into the land based on your promises, and not like the spies that cowered, that they would be world changers representing your light in their generation.

We thank you, Father, for this Shabbat, your spirit of joy and peace. In the name of Yeshua, we pray, amen. All right, guys, we're gonna say the Lord's Prayer together. And so in this tradition, we are teaching our children to say this prayer, and I think most of them have memorized it, but we're gonna invite everybody, including the kids, to say the Lord's Prayer all together. So everybody ready? Let's go.

Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love, a place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God. Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family, so welcome home.

Announcements and Welcome

All righty. Quick announcement that's important. Men, thank you, men. Guys, we have monthly fellowship that we meet once a month and just hang out somewhere, get some food. But we also just launched our Bible study that's going to be bimonthly. First and third week. We will have more information on that. If you're not on the Discord channel, talk to Josh. We have a fit community Discord channel that's amazing. But yeah, first and third week. And we started John. And we did the intro to John a week or two ago.

And let's be honest, transparency—Heather was talking about this. Sometimes you go to a Bible study and it's like, this is great. I'm learning about the Bible. And it's really kind of boring. And it's really very superficial and boring. I am super, super, super impressed at just the very introduction to the Bible study. We didn't even get into it yet. It was just the background

information. And I, for one, am super excited to engage more and learn more. And so, guys, it's awesome. So join in, first and third Tuesdays of the month.

And so yeah, special message today. Shabbat Shalom. If this is your first time visiting or first time joining in online, welcome to Founded in Truth. My name is Matthew Vanderels, one of the community pastors here. And we are a community of believers in Yeshua, who we call Yeshua, and who have a positive view on the Torah and the rest of the Old Testament. So Shabbat Shalom again and welcome.

Setting the Stage for Hanukkah

We've kind of gotten off track a little bit in our current series that I was so excited to dive into, and that was, of course, our series on Revelation, which I, for one, have really enjoyed so far because it's one thing to study a topic or scripture and to have the knowledge, but it's another thing completely to study and structure it in a way to give a message. And so it's been very edifying for me to kind of review the information that I know about Revelation for the message series that we have. But we're not going to be continuing that sermon series today because Hanukkah is upon us. And I felt it was just appropriate to give a message on the background of Hanukkah. Some of us may have never celebrated it or don't even know what it is, as well as why, as believers, we would even want to celebrate it.

So yeah, for some of us, Hanukkah is kind of a foreign thing. It's not, it doesn't quite make the list of the typical Christian traditions or Christian holidays that have existed for 2,000 years or whatnot. Typically you have Christmas and Easter and so on and so forth. And Hanukkah, why? Why Hanukkah?

So we're going to talk about that as well. And the thing about Hanukkah, what's so interesting is that John intentionally mentions Hanukkah in his gospel account, and he intentionally mentions it in association with Yeshua. And so we're going to dive into that, but we're going to start with the big question. What is Hanukkah anyway?

The Elements of Hanukkah

Most people are familiar with Hanukkah, at least the elements of it. We have a nine-branched menorah or candelabra. That's what the word menorah means. It just means candelabra, candlestick. And what else do we typically associate with Hanukkah? We've got dreidels, right? You spin them. That's how we teach our kids to gamble at a young age. Fried foods, donuts, and latkes. And just like the elements that we typically associate in this country with Christmas, like

Christmas trees or mistletoe or presents, these things, these elements that these holidays are known for came much, much, much later. Much later. They weren't part of the origin story.

The Origins of Hanukkah

And so we're going to talk about the origin story of Hanukkah. What is the history of it? The story of Hanukkah takes place somewhere around 165 BCE or BC, during the time when the Seleucid Greek Empire had taken control over Judea, Israel. After Alexander the Great conquered the known world, when he died, his entire conquered nation, if you will, or the nation now the Greek Empire, was divided up among his four generals. And one of those kingdoms, this Seleucid Empire, came and took over or managed, a little bit of fighting, but let's just say they managed Judea.

Daniel 8 actually presents this story in the form of a prophecy, which is kind of neat. And the stories that we find documented about Hanukkah and its origin are, although not necessarily fully historical, found in the apocryphal books of the Maccabees, which are still contained in the Catholic Bible. Still not thought to be inspired scripture, but just stories that are helpful when you're reading scripture.

Greek Oppression and Resistance

And so, yeah, the story takes place with the Greeks coming in and they are taking control. They've taken control over Judea. The Jews are there, presiding there. And the Greeks, the thing about the Greeks is they thought very highly of themselves. They thought they had the best culture. They thought they had the newest modern stuff, ways of doing things. And for the most part, in a secular point of view, they absolutely did. World-changing in their line of thinking, their philosophy, and so on and so forth. But they wanted to bring this culture and this lifestyle to the Jews in Judea. And many Judeans embraced it. It was the cool hipster thing to do at the time. And they embraced it.

But the thing is, the Greeks, when looking at the Jews and their culture and their traditions and how they did things, they didn't really appreciate many aspects of it. Circumcision, for example. Why would you destroy your body, right? The kosher dietary laws, not eating the pig, but it tastes good. Why wouldn't you do that? And even their general faith and how they perceived their God and the keeping of Torah.

And so the story of the Maccabees tells us that the Greeks began to put pressure on the Jews at that time. And this pressure increased until it was practically oppression and persecution to get

the Jews to abandon their status as the covenant people of God and put away the Torah, just delete the Torah from their lives and embrace Greek culture and Greek faith and Greek philosophy. And this pressure increased until a battle broke out, an all-out war broke out, if you will, and the Greeks and the Jews fought. And the Greek army was led by a man named Antiochus Epiphanes, which literally means epiphanes, like epiphany, God manifest. God is manifest, proclaimed himself as God.

The Defilement of the Temple

And one of the things the Greeks did on the 25th day of the winter month of Kislev is—well, the book's right—they erected a pagan altar on top of the altar in the temple, and right there in the courts, they sacrificed to a pagan god. A few verses earlier indicate that most likely it was a pig that they offered. So imagine if that's the case, they come into the holy temple of God, full of the set-apartness and the status, the caducea of holiness, and they set up an altar on top of the altar of God, and they spill the blood of a pig there in the altar, on the courts, and so on and so forth. Quite a big deal, if you will. Quite a big deal. And this was a huge abomination, naturally. This sacred place had been completely defiled.

The Maccabean Victory

And battle after battle, the priestly family, the Hasmoneans, otherwise referred to as the Maccabees, began to claim victory over the Greeks, battle after battle, until eventually they pushed the Greeks out of Judea. They kind of won. It's a big deal. This is on par with like a scene out of Braveheart. Imagine us pushing the English out of Scotland. Freedom. This is what took place.

And then in chapter four of the book of 1 Maccabees, the people return to the temple and they're heartbroken because they walk into this place that represents heaven on earth. The place where the glory of God creates a crater in this place and where you go and have intimate worship with the Father. And bushes sprang up, shrubs everywhere. They go inside the temple and unspeakable awful things have taken place there and things are still there. And so they get some bleach and they begin to scrub and clean all this up.

Cleansing and Rededication

But the issue they had was with the altar because it would have been very difficult to ignore the fact that a pig was sacrificed on top of the altar of God. I mean, imagine them reintroducing

sacrifices in worship and they're reintroducing the festivals and the feast days and they're sacrificing these animals and praising God but in the back of their minds pig blood was all over that. What do we do about that? They knew they would remember what the Greeks did. And so they did what anyone would do. They got a big sledgehammer and they went to swinging and they knocked the altar down and they got all the stones and they moved them out of the courts and they went outside and they collected unhewn stones as the Torah commands and they rebuilt a brand new altar.

And on the very same day, the 25th day of the month of Kislev, they rededicated this altar to God and went to connect with their God. And when they looked in Scripture, tried to figure out, okay, we've never dedicated or rededicated an altar before. How did these things take place?

The Meaning of Hanukkah

So they're going through the Torah and they're going through the books they had. And in 1 Kings, they read about the very first temple that King Solomon dedicated. And they read about this altar that was built there. And so they read about how King Solomon, during the eight days of the Feast of Tabernacles, dedicated the temple and its altar. So in like manner, they too held an eight-day festival of dedication. And that's what the word Hanukkah means. It simply means to dedicate or dedication. It's the Hebrew word for dedicate. And that's also why Hanukkah lasts eight days. Kind of an underwhelming explanation, I know, but that's why. It was a celebration of Sukkot. And the books of Maccabees say that because they weren't able to celebrate Sukkot and many other feast days, they felt it was appropriate. You know what? We're not waiting another year to have a party and to reflect on the joy and the grace that God's given to us to even allow us this victory, but most importantly, to rededicate this place that was so defiled that it would be once again an accepting of him and we can join in worshipping and reconnect in relationship with our God the way that they saw it.

The Sacred Stones

Now, kind of a nerdy fact. The question is: What did the Maccabees do with the stones that made up the altar that was defiled? Well, in verse 46 of 1 Maccabees chapter 4, it tells us what they did, right? And I think we have a slide, hopefully. 1 Maccabees 4:46 says, And they laid up the stones in the mountain of the temple in a convenient place.

So imagine that. Guys, what are we going to do with these stones? Oh man, we could probably put them up on that high shelf. That's inconvenient. This is more convenient. I don't know.

That's just a convenient place. Until there should come a prophet to show what should be done with them. They didn't know what to do with the stones. They felt like they needed to store them. They'd never been through this situation before. They knew they needed to rebuild it, but what are they supposed to do with the old stones that have been sanctified for temple use?

They have a level of holiness or kedushah attributed to them despite their defiled status. It's kind of like when, yeah, oh man, that's good. And we're gonna let Heather come up here and take the message because that's so good, just like us. Next year is a Hanukkah message, thank you. So those of you who may be the generation that actually has a physical Bible, right? I know there's judgment to those of us who typically read on the computer screen. But you ever have an old Bible that you dedicated a lot of time and energy to? And over time, this Bible ages, not like fine wine. It starts falling apart, right? Pages are ripped up or crinkled, and then you open it up and the binding on the back's cracking, and then finally it'll rip and just fall off. The covers already fall off. You're trying to carry it around. It falls apart, missing pages.

So what do you do? You just throw it away, right, and get a new Bible? Why don't you throw the Bible away that's falling apart and really isn't that useful because it's falling apart? It's not worth it. You're not going to use it again. Why not just throw it in the trash? It has a level of perceived holiness about it, right? And so this is the same type of idea with these stones. We can't just throw them away. So they took the stones and stored them where they were sanctified to be, on the temple mount, in a special chamber called the Lashkat HaKadamot, or the Chamber of Tokens, if you will. This is where tokens or seals that were exchanged for money for people to purchase, like libations such as flour and wine, various offerings. So it was in this back room, I think, in the far right corner of the Temple Mount. Regardless, so in the next Bible Trivia at Applebee's, you will know the answer to that.

The point is that it was a really big deal. The altar was rebuilt. It was dedicated. But despite the stones having a level of defilement in association with what took place, their holiness meant they couldn't be disregarded. And so they kept them there until a prophet would come one day and tell them what in the world to do with them.

The True Reason for Hanukkah

Now, this is a story of Hanukkah, when the world was in its darkest moments and the beautiful grace of God opened up for the opportunity of rededication, of communion. And there's a misconception about Hanukkah and why it is celebrated. Many people assume that it is celebrated because of the military victory of the Maccabees, which was another name for the

priestly family that revolted, the Hasmoneans, the family that led the revolt. But that's not really why Hanukkah is celebrated. Those are things that people celebrate and honor along with it, but that's not really why. The core reason wasn't about liberty or freedom, fighting back. It wasn't about the fact that they could now keep Torah again. No, 1 Maccabees 4, verse 59 tells us what provoked this celebration to continue year after year.

Then Judas and his brothers and all the assembly of Israel determined that every year at that season, the days of dedication of the altar should be observed with joy and gladness for eight days, beginning on the 25th day of the month of Kislev.

The focus is that every year they will remember that despite what happens, despite how hard it is, there is always an opportunity for rededication. This is the day that we remember that the impossible was overshadowed by God's power. And Hanukkah remembers that when the altar was defiled, restoration and rededication was not too far out of reach. There was always hope. And it's appropriate during this time to reflect on that—and this may sound kind of like a cheesy metaphor. I don't care. It's impactful. Reflect on your own altar and the altar of your heart. What have you been offering to God? Is there defilement there? Is there something that needs to be torn down and rededicated with a new start?

Jesus at the Temple During Hanukkah

And so we're going to jump over to John chapter 10. We're going to read the Word of God today, starting in verse 22. So if you would turn to your Bibles to John chapter 10, we're just going to read a couple of verses here. And we're going to read the section of when Yeshua finds himself in the temple during the season of Hanukkah or the time of Hanukkah. But we're going to read a little bit more to discover what happens and why John is emphasizing this entire event. The gospel writers don't have to tell us everything that happened. They picked and chose what they wanted to present and how to present it. And so that's why it's important. It's not just something that finds itself in the Bible.

Starting in verse 22, then came the festival of dedication, Hanukkah, at Jerusalem. It was winter and Jesus was in the temple courts walking in Solomon's colonnade. The Jews who were there gathered around him saying, how long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly. Jesus answered, I did tell you, but you didn't believe me. The works I do in my Father's name testify about who I am. But you do not believe because you're not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice. I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they shall

never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father who has given them to me is greater than all. No one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one.

Again, verse 31, his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him. That escalated real quick. But Jesus said to them, I have shown you many good works from the Father. Which of these do you stone me for? We are not stoning you for any good work that you've done, they replied, but for blasphemy because you, a mere man, claim to be God.

Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law? I have said you are God's. If he called them gods to whom the word of God came from and scripture cannot be set aside, what about the one whom the father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me, you blasphemy, because I said I am God's son? Do not believe me unless I do the works of my father. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works that you may know and understand that the father is in me and I in the father.

Again, they became triggered and tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp. All right, everybody good?

The Gospel Writers' Intentional Choices

Yeshua is in Jerusalem during the Feast of Hanukkah, walking in Solomon's colonnade. And as I said, John is very intentional about how he sets up his account of the gospel of Yeshua. Each author of the gospel accounts acted as a film director when they began to write or hired someone else to write the account—dictate it, I mean—or transcribe it. Each one emphasizes specific details and events of Yeshua's ministry that are intended to navigate you as the reader to the aspect of Yeshua that they wanted to emphasize most, right? It's their movie that they're presenting to you. Some of them even move events around in their movie so that they can emphasize a point that they feel is bigger than where the event occurred or how it occurred.

Jesus Clears the Temple

Jesus flipping tables in the temple, for example. Everybody knows the scene. Walks in there and whip. Animals flying everywhere. Get out. Flipping tables over. Coins everywhere. Matthew and Mark, in these accounts, they both depict Yeshua driving out the money changers at the end of his ministry. It's the next thing he does after riding in as this king about to triumph over the enemy on a donkey in Jerusalem. After this occurs, next thing: as king, we're going to clean up this temple. Runs in there. All kinds of commotion.

In John, however, in John's account, this incident is how Yeshua launches his entire ministry. It's like the first thing he does. He turns water into wine, and then he walks into the temple and drives everyone out. And some people get really upset when they read that, why isn't that at the end of his ministry in John? Why is the Bible contradicting or changing? This comes from possibly just having or being ingrained with a more fundamentalistic mindset when we get really upset when the gospel accounts don't line up or details don't line up.

And we forget there are different authors painting different pictures. And there's a bigger picture to be painted. I don't believe the Bible contradicts itself. I think that it's beautifully written. We forget that the entire Bible is this collection, a library of books and letters and parables and wisdom literature and actual accounts by people. It was written by people, humans that were inspired by God to write it. And the authors were not simply writing stuff down randomly. It was intentional. Just because it's sometimes a big deal for us doesn't mean it was a big deal for them.

John's Theological Emphasis

And so John, what is he emphasizing throughout his gospel account? What are the big things that he emphasizes throughout his account? Well, one of the biggest things in his account is the deity of Yeshua. That's something he hammers. He is divine, God, manifest, manifest.

John emphasizes him as being the true light. That word comes up a lot—23 times in his book, seven times at the beginning of the opening chapter. Seven, probably intentional. He is the true light that brings forth the presence of God to all mankind.

The other big thing that John emphasizes in his account specifically, more so than the others, is him being the true temple—the true place where heaven meets earth. And so naturally, he starts his ministry by emphasizing the corruptness going on in the earthly temple and his zeal for the place where God's holiness and peace are supposed to flow from. And I think that's absolutely beautiful. This is, of course, how he would start his ministry. I love that.

The Feast Days and Their Fulfillment

Something else that John does is he uses the feast days and structures them in a way that uplifts Yeshua as the ultimate culmination of their purpose. For example, specifically three: Passover, Feast of Tabernacles, and I believe Hanukkah.

In John chapter 6, John frames this incident as Yeshua being this greater fulfillment of Passover. We see this in John chapter 6, starting in verse 3. And what happens next? You have this huge crowd of people that just appears in the story out of nowhere, and they're hungry for bread. And just like the first Exodus account, if you will, people in the wilderness hungry for bread. And here Yeshua brings forth the miracle of the fish sandwiches. He feeds everyone with bread and fish, right?

Verse 31, here's their response: "Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness. As it is written, he gave them bread from heaven to eat. Jesus said to them, truly, verily, I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread of heaven. For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives you life to the world. Sir, they said, always give us this bread. Then Jesus declared, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never go thirsty."

John did not have to tell us that it was near the time of Passover for this story to still have this impact of him being the bread of life. He didn't have to put that as the foundation, but he did. So we have John associating Yeshua with being the bread that brings forth life, associated with the Exodus account, inaugurating a new Passover, a greater Passover, a greater Exodus that he is inaugurating.

You also have John associating Yeshua with the Feast of Tabernacles in the very next chapter. From Passover to the Feast of Tabernacles in the next chapter, starting in verse 11. So here John is intentionally drawing your attention to this festival. John is structuring his account of Yeshua a certain way. So we can expect him to link Yeshua to Sukkot in some way during this chapter.

Majority of the chapter is a discussion about who Yeshua is and the debate between himself and the religious leaders around him. And here is what happens in verse 37: "By this he meant the Spirit. Up to that point, or up to that time, the Spirit had not been given since Jesus had not yet been glorified. And here, on hearing his words, some of the people said, surely this man's a prophet. And others said, no, he is the Messiah."

So we know there was a water libation, a water-pouring ceremony that took place during the Feast of Tabernacles. And it's inferred here that Yeshua is focusing that onto himself, using the same keywords and language that are associated with the water-pouring ceremony that took place at the temple during the Feast of Tabernacles. This grand spectacle. And here Yeshua is saying that, no, I am the one who quenches the thirst from within—the true fulfillment of what this feast represents.

So John associates Yeshua with the ultimate fulfillment of Passover and the ultimate fulfillment of the second or greater Exodus. And John is, in some way, shape, or form, associating Yeshua with the ultimate fulfillment of the greater meaning behind the Feast of Tabernacles where God took care of us in the Exodus event, in the wilderness, and God dwelled among us. Love that. It's a time to ask for the blessing of rain so that we would not be parched and our land would not be parched. Truly a sign of God's graciousness and his salvation to his people. But here, standing before us, is the ultimate fulfillment of God's graciousness and salvation poured out for his people, which is Yeshua.

Hanukkah and the True King

And then we come to chapter 10. So Passover week is a week-long festival with unleavened bread. And then we go to Sukkot, and that's another week-long festival, right? And John now takes us to chapter 10 where we have another festival going on, Hanukkah, which is another week-long festival. It's kind of neat. And, of course, the context here, once again, is who is the fullness of the person of Yeshua. That's what everybody's been contending with the entire story. Who are you? Tell us plainly. Just let us know.

And how does Yeshua answer this request? He says, "I did tell you, but you didn't believe." Earlier in the chapter, he proclaims that he is the good shepherd. It's a reference from [Isaiah 34](#) that is actually attributed to Yahweh himself. John's doing that on purpose. He's expounding on the times when Yeshua referred to things in the Bible, in the Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible, that were directly associated with God. I am the good shepherd, he says.

Why is this significant? Why is it significant that Yeshua is here in Jerusalem during the time of Hanukkah? And not only that, standing in the temple courts, it is here that he claims to be the giver of true life, eternal life. Not only that, it's here where he claims that he is the shepherd and that God gives all of the flock over to him. Not only that, he goes on to claim that him and the Father are one.

This triggers his Jewish opponents there. And what did they do? Verse 31: "Again, his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him. But Jesus said to them, 'I've shown you many good works from the Father. Which one are you going to stone me over this time?' 'We're not stoning you for any good work. Blasphemy. Because you, a mere man, claim to be God.'"

A man claiming to be God. Who else claimed to be God during the Hanukkah motif? Antiochus Epiphanes, the leader of the Greeks that tormented the Jews during the time of the Maccabees.

So you have a fake representation of God manifest found in Antiochus Epiphanes, and the Jews rejected him. But here you have the true presence of God in human form, and this group of Jews rejects him as well. See, this is the issue Yeshua has been contending with for several chapters now. There are groups of people here that have an issue with Yeshua. And they can't tell the fake apart from the legitimate. They can't tell the difference between Yeshua and Antiochus.

The word that John uses for "stone him"—when they picked up stones to stone him—is only found in two other places in the Hebrew Bible: [1 Samuel 16:4](#) and verse 13. Both times it's in the context of a descendant of Saul, enemy of David, picking up stones to throw at the Davidic king. I'd like to think that was intentional by John. I'd like to make that connection and stretch it. I don't know, but I'd like to think that.

You have King David having stones thrown at him, and then you have people who are opposed to the true Davidic king picking up stones to throw at him. Now, Hanukkah, the dedication of the altar, is the core meaning. But the good works of the Maccabees were also honored during this time, right? Here are the soldiers who stood up in the face of this persecution. But here, the enemies of Yeshua wish to stone him.

Again, the true Davidic Messiah for his good works or despite his good works. Guys, there's so many possible contrasts going on here. I and the Father are one. If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. The works that I do are given to me by the Father. They are my Father's works. Yeshua also hammers the point that the true sheep hear his voice. There are sheep that do not know his voice. Let that sink in. There are other sheep that are not listening to his voice. Not all sheep are part of the flock of Yeshua. He tells his opposition here in verse 26 that y'all, you fall in that category. You're not my sheep. You are not my, because you do not believe. You're not part of my flock, which is kind of neat because we always think of anyone who's like outside. Those are wolves. Everyone's a wolf who's not part of, no. No.

True and False Sheep

We have themes of rededication, themes of not knowing God enough to distinguish the fake from the real. You have an intentional turning away from the evidence Yeshua presents you with, his works. And here we see that there are sheep that may be in the same field as his flock, may be following or wandering after the shepherd, but they're not his. They are not truly in his fold despite appearances. Yeshua goes on to say that no one can snatch his flock from his hand. He then says he gives them eternal life. No one can snatch them out of his hand. I love that verse. It's such a comforting metaphor, right? No one can snatch us away from our shepherd.

This phrase is actually found in the book of Psalms. John seems to be doing what John is supposed to be doing, directing a movie, and he's hyperlinking us back to Psalms when he emphasizes, I believe, this saying from Yeshua. And it happens in [Psalm 95](#). And we're going to unpack most of this chapter because he's linking us back to this one verse because he wants to show us the context of the entire chapter. I am making that assumption. I believe it's obvious. Psalm chapter 95, and we'll start. You can start in verse 1, but we're going to start in verse 6 just to condense it a little bit. And it says this in verse 6, "O come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker, for He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand." Some of your translations may say something like, we are secure in his presence or comforted by his security. But in the Hebrew, it is literally, and here in the NASB, it says, we are sheep of his hand. Do not harden your hearts as at Meribah, as on the day at Massa in the wilderness. Love that, sheep of his hand.

The Two Exodus Narratives

So [Psalm 95](#) is speaking about the greatness of God and it refers to the Exodus account. So the people singing and praising God and proclaiming that they are the people of his pasture and also saying they are the sheep within his hand. They are part of his flock. We are safe. We have entered into his blessing and his promise. We are the ones that hear his voice. Believe in verse 7. But then the chapter turns a bit grim. It's like a very sudden transition to something that's a bit darker in recounting the Exodus account for the first generation that resisted. And what's it say? Though they had seen my works, they still do not believe. They do not hear his voice. That's exactly what's happening in John chapter 10.

This little reference in John unpacks just so much more. It's like one of those zip files. You unzip and extract. It unpacks this chapter that is speaking of the same thing happening during Hanukkah with Yeshua. There is a flock that is within his hand. They know his voice. And there are sheep that don't believe, despite them seeing his works. And those are the ones that do not enter his rest. The greater exodus that has been inaugurated by Yeshua, just like the first exodus, has two groups of people. Those who murmured, those who complained, those who refused to endure to the end, those who refused to believe and grab hold of the promises of God and his salvation, and they were left in the wilderness. And there's another group that pushed forward and that dared boldly to enter into the promised land, the land of his rest.

Yeshua as the Sanctified Place

John chapter 10, verse 36, Yeshua is speaking and he says, Are you saying of him whom the Father sanctified or set apart? So here Yeshua is displayed as the true agent of God amongst this controversy. Here Yeshua claims to be sanctified by God himself while he's standing in the temple courts where the altar that was sanctified and rededicated during the Hanukkah event. But here, he is the one that is dedicated for this purpose. He is the one that's sanctified. Coals on like the heads of his opposition. Just you could tell, did he say that directly? Just pick up the stones. Just pick them up. I have feelings and emotions. Just pick them up. Here, Yeshua is displayed as that true agent that is sanctified. And he's rejected directly.

Scholar Craig Keener points out an interesting fact here that relates back to our point that John is directing a movie. We as the audience know things about Yeshua that his opposition during this time doesn't. We're outside the film looking in. We already know the story. We know the details. So it's not like we're finding out different things. We know that he's divine. He's deity. [John 1.1](#) and verse 18. His opposition isn't getting that. Here his opposition is rejecting the God of Israel and their claims of him making himself a human to be God is also backwards because as we read [John 1.14](#), Yeshua is not making himself to be God, but God already made human, this divine representation or manifestation.

The Greater Fulfillment

John beautifully paints Yeshua as being the greater fulfillment or Passover Messiah and Exodus. He portrays Yeshua as being the greater fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles. Sukkot represented the journey through the wilderness. Again, he is the bread that rained down from heaven. He is the water that gives true life. And here in [John 10](#), I believe we see Yeshua being the fulfillment of the Hanukkah event, a time when lines were blurred, where war was going on. There was lots of uncertainty where there was one that stood up proclaiming himself as God and convincing many in Israel to follow him, apostates to the faith. A time when victory was won and a place that was not fit to worship the Lord was rededicated and sanctified so that the people of God could once again celebrate before God's presence fully in spirit and in truth.

Here, Yeshua is that sanctified place where we find God's presence. Despite the war, despite the chaos, despite the confusing leadership that tells us to go one way or go another and ignore his works, Yeshua says, I am the place where you find rest because he is the good shepherd. On the day that is celebrating holiness and grace of God found in the rededication and the restoration of the temple and the altar, that John is pointing out greater fulfillment of rededication of both is happening. It is happening. The restoration of a place where God and man meet, the meeting place of heaven and earth, is Yeshua. And look at where John says Yeshua is. He's in Solomon's

colonnade. He's in the place that the Greeks trampled. He's in the place where the Greeks spilt the blood of the swine before God, where the abomination took place. And he now stands as the good shepherd, as king, as the image of God in the midst of all of Israel.

Forgetting Our Shepherd

And sometimes we forget that. Sometimes we forget about who our shepherd is. That's what Heather was just talking about. Are we really anticipating the fullness of who God is? Do we really have that impact? Sometimes we forget the sound of his voice. And sometimes we trick ourselves into thinking that God is in this place when he's really not. And so we dwell there. Sometimes we just get distracted. We get distracted with so much stuff in the world. Aren't there a lot of distractions outside? Golly, so many distractions. So many things that we have the opportunity to devote our attention and energy, get all excited and anxious about. So many things that we have the opportunity to stop everything that God is calling us towards and our purpose of being here and fulfilling that mandate, to stop and pause it all so that we can get all anxious about stuff. Get distracted. We get distracted with judging other people instead of loving other people. We get distracted by what the billboards on our televisions tell us. We get the distractions of the weight of unexpected things that happen in our lives. Sometimes we get distracted because of sin in our lives that we just don't want to deal with. So we look for distractions so we don't have to deal with it.

What Has Defiled Our Altar?

Sometimes our routine is stripped from us and we are so vain to think that our comfort is more important than building loving relationships in the name of Yeshua. What has entered into our life that has caused our altar to be defiled before God? What have we held on to? I've purged all the sin and distractions from my life except that shoebox sin that's up in the corner of the closet. I like to ignore it. Collects dust, but we want to keep it. We're going to have a party tomorrow for the Feast of Dedication in light of Yeshua, through the lens of Yeshua. And it's going to be fun. But right now, I'm begging you to take a look and consider what you're offering to God in your life, what you're offering to God in this season, this season that many of us lose motivation for just about everything. God can meet you where you're at, but not where you're pretending to be. And I believe this is what the story of Hanukkah teaches us.

A Sledgehammer Season

It's the same thing that Yeshua teaches us. And so if there's something in your life that you do need to grab a sledgehammer and tear it down in order to rebuild something fresh to be an offering of God, gosh, do it. Do it. Do it. Knock it down. Knock it down today. And instead of trying to rebuild it yourself, just cry out to God. Make me the offering that you would want me to be in this world, that there would be no defilement, that there would be no corruption, that there would be nothing that is fake. Give it up. Now is an appropriate season to do such a thing.

I'd like to end with a quote by Victor J. Donovan in his article on Hanukkah and the birth of Christ. And worship team, you guys can come up as we conclude services. Let us use these thoughts, therefore, on the Hanukkah of old in order to make our Advent a truly messianic one leading up to God's birth among men. Then will be fulfilled the words of the prophet Isaiah saying, the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light. To them that dwell in the region of the shadow of death, light is risen. People will see the great light, Jesus Christ, shining in our lives today.

And so please stand as we conclude with worship. Guys, I don't know where you're at today in this season of dedication or rededication. I don't know where you're at as the days grow darker. I don't know where you're at with a time when many people feel isolated and the motivation to be the true witness and to endure with the light of Yeshua becomes less motivating. It's not quite as passionate sometimes. It's a time when we embrace distractions sometimes. It's a time when we're no longer offering appropriate things and being that sacrifice to God. And so, if that's you today, if there is something in your life that does need to be knocked down and be rebuilt so that you can continue being this agent in light of what Yeshua has done, so that you can be the one that bursts forth with the light of the one who has come on the crib and the cross, the crown of glory, I would invite you to take that opportunity today and cry out to God. Cry out to God to destroy it and rebuild you. And if you need prayer today, I invite you to take advantage of that. We have a prayer team on both sides. Knock it down. Knock it down during this season. They'll pray with you, lift you up, and you can take that first step in truly examining your life and what needs to be taken out of it so that God can fully use you.

A Prayer for Dedication

Avinu Malkenu, our father, our king. Father, we thank you for this opportunity to dive into the account of our king, Yeshua, by John, your servant. We thank you for this inspired word that came to us so that we can see the fullness of who Yeshua is in the Passover, in the Feast of Tabernacles, and in the time of dedication where the true temple is manifest in who he is. We ask, Father, that the Spirit that you say, the Holy Spirit that you say is already within us would

do its job to strengthen us, to expose the things that we need to grow out of and grow in today, and to give us the boldness to acknowledge those things and knock them down and rebuild. Make us your witnesses, Father. Make us vessels of light that are seen in the world, not for us, but for your kingdom. We thank you in the name of Yeshua, we pray, amen.

Closing Worship

I am the Lord your God. I go before, I stand beside. I'm all around, though you feel I'm far out, I'm closer than your breath. You're more than you. I am the Lord, your peace.

No evil will conquer you. Steady now your heart and mind. Come into my right way. Whatever you do to me. All you need to do. I'm everything, all you need, Breathing in the wind and the waves. I am your stead. So don't be afraid. Though your heart and flesh may fail you, I'm in everything in the wind and the waves. I am your stead. Do not be afraid. Though your heart and flesh may fail you, I'm your faithful strength wherever you go. So come to do everything. So come to do.

Thank you, Abba. You are everything.

Yevarech aga Adonai ve'yishmerecha. Yipan lecha ve'chonecha. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you his peace. Shabbat Shalom. Shalom.

I'm Matthew Vanderels, and I hope you enjoyed this message. Founded in Truth exists to build a community that bears the image of God and lives the redeemed life only Yeshua gives. If this message impacted you or if this ministry has been a blessing to you, we invite you to take part in making sure the message of Yeshua and the truth of God's word continues to reach others. To make sure this happens, you can donate through our online giving portal at foundedintruth.com/give or by texting any amount to 704-275-0752. Don't forget to like and subscribe for new content every single week. And we thank you for your continued support. And we look forward to seeing you next time. Shalom.

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