

Hanukkah - Should/Can Christians Celebrate This Holiday?

STUDY GUIDE | Hanukkah — History, Scripture and Discernment

Finding the Ancient Path | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjbB9GEuHMA>

Teaching Purpose

Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication, remembers the recovery and rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem after the persecution of the Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV. The speaker explains that Hanukkah is not one of Yehovah's commanded appointed times in Leviticus 23, yet argues that disciples of Yeshua may commemorate its history. He particularly highlights the courage of Mattathias and Judah Maccabeus to resist enforced idolatry and maintain faithfulness to Yehovah.

Quick Answer

Hanukkah is a historical eight-day remembrance of the Temple's rededication, not a commanded pilgrimage Feast in Leviticus 23. A Christian may choose to commemorate it as a remembrance of faithfulness and deliverance, without treating its customs as divine commandments. John 10:22-23 records Yeshua at the Temple during the Feast of Dedication, but does not explicitly state which Hanukkah practices He observed.

Core distinction

Hanukkah is a commemorative event arising in Jewish history, not a Feast established by the commands of Leviticus 23. 1 Maccabees is historical/deuterocanonical literature, and the oil miracle is later tradition. Avoid treating these levels of authority as equal.

Teaching Outline and Key Takeaways

Hanukkah is not a commanded Feast

Leviticus 23 lists the appointed times; Hanukkah arose centuries after the Torah was given. The speaker compares the commemoration to a national holiday that remembers a significant deliverance, without making it obligatory.

The Feast of Dedication in John 10

John locates Yeshua in Solomon's Porch during the Feast of Dedication in winter. The account confirms His presence during the festival; it does not spell out whether or how He performed modern Hanukkah customs.

Historical setting: Antiochus and enforced assimilation

The Teaching describes Antiochus IV's suppression of Sabbath observance, sacrifices, and circumcision. The Maccabean narrative depicts resistance to religious coercion; specific historical assertions should be checked against 1 Maccabees and historical scholarship.

Mattathias and Judah Maccabeus

The speaker admires Mattathias's resolve and Judah's leadership. The account of violence in 1 Maccabees is a historical narrative, not an instruction to modern believers to imitate violent acts.

Purifying and rededicating the Temple

The Maccabees repaired the Temple and altar and celebrated for eight days. The historical account of the dedication and the later oil miracle tradition should be distinguished.

Hanukkah, menorah, and oil tradition

A Hanukkah holds eight festival lights and a shamash, in contrast to the seven-branched sanctuary menorah described in Exodus 25. The one-day supply of oil lasting eight days is a later traditional account, not stated in 1 Maccabees.

Ezekiel 8 and the danger of idolatry

Ezekiel condemns idolatry at Yehovah's sanctuary. The speaker uses that passage as an analogy for guarding worship, not as a historical account of Hanukkah.

Practicing remembrance at home

The fellowship describes light kindling, prayer, family instruction, gifts, singing, dreidels, and foods fried in oil. These are customary choices, not requirements commanded by Yehovah.

Conviction, freedom, and family relationships

The group considers how families transitioning from Christmas traditions might commemorate Hanukkah. The Teaching encourages attention to meaning and conscience rather than making decorations or gifts the central point.

Closing conversation and reflections

A participant explains how their family observes Hanukkah and discusses the dreidel letters that distinguish "there" from "here" in the traditional phrase about a great miracle.

Key Scriptures — Contextual Notes

Leviticus 23:1-44

Lists Yehovah's appointed times. Hanukkah is not included in this commanded festival calendar.

John 10:22-23

Places Yeshua in the Temple during the winter Feast of Dedication; presence is explicit, specific celebrations are not.

1 Maccabees 1:41-50

Historical account of decrees suppressing Israelite worship and covenant practices; historical/deuterocanonical source rather than Torah command.

1 Maccabees 2:15-28

Describes Mattathias's resistance to compelled sacrifice and the beginning of the revolt; not a command for modern believers to use force.

1 Maccabees 2:49-70

Records Mattathias's counsel to his sons and his call for zeal for the covenant.

1 Maccabees 4:36-59

Describes purification and rededication of the altar, eight-day rejoicing, and establishment of annual remembrance.

2 Maccabees 10:1-8

Another historical account connecting the eight-day celebration with a festival-like period of rejoicing.

Exodus 25:31-40

Describes the seven-branched sanctuary lampstand, distinct from the later nine-light Hanukkah.

Exodus 27:20-21

Describes oil and continual tending of sanctuary light; background for understanding the Temple lampstand.

Numbers 25:6-13

Describes Phinehas's zeal in a specific Israelite covenant setting; speaker draws a historical comparison with Mattathias.

Daniel 3:13-18

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse coerced idol worship, furnishing a biblical comparison for courage under persecution.

Daniel 6:6-23

Daniel continues prayer despite a royal prohibition; illustrates devotion under pressure.

Ezekiel 8:1-18

Condemns idolatry within the sanctuary; the Teaching uses it as a moral analogy, not a Hanukkah origin narrative.

Ezekiel 10:18-19

Depicts the departure of Yehovah's glory from the Temple; illustrates the seriousness of temple desecration.

Acts 3:1-10

Records healing at the Beautiful Gate, mentioned as a visual aside during the Temple discussion.

Exodus 32:1-35

The golden calf episode warns against corrupting worship; related background rather than Hanukkah legislation.

Deuteronomy 12:29-32

Warns Israel not to adopt the worship practices of surrounding peoples; supports the Teaching's concern about syncretism.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Calls Israel to love Yehovah and teach His words within family life; applied to intentional family instruction.

Joshua 24:14-15

Calls for wholehearted service to Yehovah; reflects the speaker's emphasis on refusing idolatrous compromise.

Psalms 119:105

Describes Yehovah's Word as light for the path; can be used for reflection without equating the verse with Hanukkah.

Matthew 5:14-16

Yeshua calls His disciples the light of the world; supports a contemporary moral application of light imagery.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17

Describes believers as God's temple; the speaker draws an analogy between historical rededication and faithful living.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Calls believers to honor God with their bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit; an application, not a Hanukkah command.

Romans 14:5-6

Discusses differing convictions about days; any application to Hanukkah should be presented carefully as interpretive.

1 Thessalonians 5:21-22

Urges testing everything and holding fast to what is good; supports evaluating customs against Scripture.

Revelation 13:7-10

Describes persecution and perseverance; the speaker proposes an end-time analogy, not a demonstrated Hanukkah prediction.

Study and Discussion Questions

1. 1. Is Hanukkah commanded by Yehovah?

Suggested answer: No. Hanukkah is not listed among the appointed times in Leviticus 23.

2. 2. What does Hanukkah commemorate?

Suggested answer: The recovery and rededication of the Temple after persecution in the second century BCE.

3. 3. Can a Christian celebrate Hanukkah?

Suggested answer: The Teaching says believers may commemorate the event voluntarily without treating it as a commanded Feast.

4. 4. Does John 10 say Yeshua celebrated Hanukkah?

Suggested answer: John 10:22-23 places Him at the Temple during the Feast of Dedication; it does not describe His observance of individual customs.

5. 5. What is the Feast of Dedication?

Suggested answer: It is the festival later known as Hanukkah, remembering the Temple's rededication.

6. 6. Who was Antiochus IV Epiphanes?

Suggested answer: A Seleucid ruler whose campaign against Jewish covenant practices forms the background to the Maccabean revolt.

7. 7. Who was Mattathias in the Hanukkah story?

Suggested answer: A Jewish priest remembered in 1 Maccabees for resisting coerced idolatrous worship.

8. 8. Who was Judah Maccabeus?

Suggested answer: The son of Mattathias who led the revolt and helped restore Temple worship.

9. 9. Why does Hanukkah last eight days?

Suggested answer: 1 Maccabees describes eight days of rededication; later tradition also recounts oil lasting eight days.

10. 10. Is the Hanukkah oil miracle recorded in Scripture?

Suggested answer: It is a later traditional account; it is not recorded in 1 Maccabees or in John 10.

11. 11. What is the difference between a menorah and Hanukkiah?

Suggested answer: The biblical sanctuary menorah has seven branches; a Hanukkiah is used for eight festival lights plus a shamash.

12. 12. What does the shamash candle do?

Suggested answer: It serves as a helper light used to kindle the other Hanukkah lights.

Application

Choose fidelity over conformity. Read 1 Maccabees as historical testimony, examine Leviticus 23 and John 10 carefully, and avoid describing optional traditions as commandments. Practice family instruction and hospitality without pressuring others to adopt particular customs.

Editorial Review

John 10 documents Yeshua's presence, not every mode of participation. The Hanukkah oil account is later tradition. Proposed links to future persecution, comments about Christmas, and analogies to violent resistance are speaker interpretations, not direct instructions for current action.