

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG67 – The Feast of Dedication

Our podcast today is on the topic of Hanukkah. This is the season of Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication. If it may seem a little early to some of you, you must remember that Hanukkah is based upon really a lunar calendar, as most events in Jewish tradition are. And so, it varies anywhere from into November through December. A lot of people think that Hanukkah must be connected with Christmas, because it is kind of a "Christmas wannabe," and that is not true. It is not trying to follow our Christmas celebration that we have as Christians. It is a completely separate holiday, and it was begun before Christmas existed. So, it may seem a little early to some, but it is the season for Hanukkah.

I want to connect with what I believe are the feelings of emphasis for this year's time of the Feast of Dedication, or the Festival of Dedication, or Hanukkah—however you are used to relating to it. First of all, I want to remind you that I have done previous podcasts on Hanukkah. The first is entitled, "Eight Reasons for Christians to Celebrate Hanukkah," which is Episode 16, and can be found on the Hargraveministries.org website. You can download it there, review it again; it would be good study for you. The second is, "Hanukkah—Do Not Be Conformed to This World." That is Episode 17, and I very much encourage you to listen to that prior to Hanukkah, because it is filled with much of the foundational information about Hanukkah: why we celebrate it, where it came from, how it started, what the Jewish foundations of Hanukkah are. I do not want to repeat a lot of those things in this podcast today, so instead, I am encouraging you to do the homework yourself. Go listen to it. It is a wonderful podcast, and it is very anointed and filled with all the facts that you need to really have an understanding of Hanukkah.

We first of all recognize that it would be good to have a short definition of Hanukkah, and what I decided to do was to read out of *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, pg. 123: "The festival of dedication, which is named Hanukkah in Hebrew, is the Jewish holiday which celebrates the reconsecration of the Jerusalem temple and its altar to the traditional service of the Lord in 165 or 164 B.C.E. It begins on the 25th day of the month of Kislev (the 9th month of the lunisolar calendar; it coincides with parts of November and December) and lasts for 8 days." This gives you kind of a thumbnail sketch and understanding about Hanukkah, when it falls. It gives the answer of why it may seem early this year, because it is beginning in the month of November, and goes for eight days.

I encourage you to get in, study about it, get the understanding of it, so that you can celebrate it with real understanding and with real faith. Because, again, I believe there is tremendous significance for us as Christians to have Hanukkah celebrated in our lives. First of all, remember that Yeshua, Jesus, did participate in the time of Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication. We find that in John, the tenth chapter, at verses 22–24. It says, "At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.'" That is a wonderful dialogue to go and read through. But they were challenging Him, saying, "Are You the Messiah?" And interesting that it was done at this time of the Feast of Dedication, and it was done in the Temple where the dedication and rededication of the Temple had taken place. That is very much what

Christ was about—seeing the Temple rededicated to the Father, and to have the practices of Judaism rededicated to the Father in a purity that was needed. So I think we can, again, find significance in the fact that Yeshua was in the Temple and the Portico of Solomon, and He was speaking with those who were there, and it was during this time of the Feast of the Dedication, as it is called in John, or, during Hanukkah.

In Hebrew, Hanukkah means “dedication.” So, it is a direct labeling of what it is about. When we say Hanukkah in Hebrew, we are saying dedication. This is the time of dedication. We go through the explanation in the other podcasts about the fact that there is the menorah, or the hanukkiah, that is lighted; there are eight candles that are used; it goes for eight days. All these details are explained. But we began to understand that it is not necessarily a focus upon the lighting of candles, but it is a focus upon this idea of being dedicated, and seeing the Temple rededicated to God. Because as we know from the Book of Maccabees, it had been defiled during the Seleucid dynasty by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. And so, war ensued, and you begin to get the picture of what had transpired in the fact that pigs and other non-kosher animals were sacrificed on the altar. Basically, the Temple was turned into a temple to Zeus, and it was completely defiled. After the Maccabean revolt and the war that transpired, and they won and took over the Temple Mount and took over the Temple, they had to go in and cleanse the Temple.

I'll read a little bit out of First Maccabees, starting in Chapter Four, verses 36-43. It says, “Then said Judas and his brethren, ‘Behold, our enemies are discomfited: let us go up to cleanse and dedicate the sanctuary.’ Upon this all the host assembled themselves together and went up into Mount Sion. And when they saw the sanctuary desolate, and the altar profaned, and the gates burned up, and shrubs growing in the courts as in a forest, or in one of the mountains, yea, and the priests’ chambers pulled down; they rent their clothes, and made great lamentation, and cast ashes upon their heads, and fell down flat to the ground upon their faces, and blew an alarm with the trumpets, and cried toward heaven. Then Judas appointed certain men to fight against those that were in the fortress, until he had cleansed the sanctuary. So, he chose priests of blameless conversation, and such as had pleasure in the law; who cleansed the sanctuary and bare out the defiled stones into an unclean place.” So, these stones, including the altar, were defiled; and they tore them out and took them to an unclean place, so that they wouldn’t defile anything else that was clean.

Verse 45: “They thought it best to pull it down, lest it should be a reproach to them, because the heathen had defiled it: wherefore they pulled it down.” And this is important to realize, that the beginning of this process of dedication first required that they tear down and remove the defilement, and that which had been ruined by what was transpiring in the Temple, using it as a temple to Zeus, using it as a sacrifice place to idols. So, the first energy that they put into this process of the Feast of Dedication was to get rid of that which was defiled. And as we enter into Hanukkah ourselves, and find the importance in our own lives about it, we realize we begin with an energy, with a drive in our heart that says we must remove all defilement. The Scripture talks about getting rid of the filthiness of flesh and spirit; and so we, likewise, must remove from the temple—which is our body, which is our heart, which is our spirit—we must remove the defilement before a rededication can take place. That is why it is important to read these little sections out of the Book of Maccabees, because it gives you the idea of exactly how the process of Hanukkah was. We see them tearing down these defiled stones, tearing down the altar, and removing these things.

Verses 47–53: “Then they took whole stones according to the law, and built a new altar according to the former; and made up the sanctuary, and the things that were within the temple, and hallowed the

courts. They made also new holy vessels, and into the temple they brought the candlestick, and the altar of burnt offerings, and of incense, and the table. And upon the altar they burned incense, and the lamps that were upon the candlestick they lighted, that they might give light in the Temple. Furthermore, they set the loaves upon the table, and spread out the veils, and finished all the works which they had begun to make. Now on the five and twentieth day of the ninth month, which is called the month Casleu, in the hundred forty and eighth year, they rose up betimes in the morning, and offered sacrifice according to the law upon the new altar of burnt offerings, which they had made." So again, we see from the story that they not only rebuilt the altar, but they had to re-make much of the instruments that were used in the Temple service, because all of it had been defiled and used in the sacrifice of idols.

Again, we see the first thing that takes place is the cleansing of the Temple. And again, we see this same picture with Yeshua, right? We see that as He goes into the Temple, He cleanses the Temple. He takes the cord of whips and He starts casting out the money changers and everything that was defiling His Father's house. He had to cleanse it before He could rededicate it with His death on the cross to the Father. So, this is what we are witnessing here. We find that this is the pattern of Christ coming into our lives. It is the pattern of salvation. When Christ comes into your life at salvation, He does not build upon the old and defiled that your life has been. He removes the old, and He builds upon the new life, upon the foundation of Himself as He comes to dwell within you.

Second Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." See, He gets rid of the old. He gets rid of the defilement. In a sense, he carries out the old stones that were your life. He tears down all the elements that in your life have been defiled by your involvement and engagement with the world, by your life of sin. He takes it, He carries it all out. He removes it first. He removes what you have been and what has been within you. "Old things," it says, "pass away; behold, new things come." Then He ushers Himself into your life. He comes into our lives and He begins to build a new, fresh life upon Himself within us. This is what we see taking place.

So, as we come to a time of dedication—which is really what we know the Feast of Hanukkah, or the celebration of Hanukkah, is all about—we get rid of the defiled, but then we rededicate. And that process of getting rid of the defilement is something that we must put energy into. We must really begin in a repentance. We must begin coming before the Lord, saying, "Cleanse me. I want to pull all of this out of me—everything that has become defiled by my contact with the world or my contact with a life of sin or anything else that I have gone back into, anything else I have encountered which has defiled me; I want to remove that. I am looking for this to be a time of change for me." And that is what I believe, for me, personally, this Hanukkah is all about. I want an aggressiveness. I want a determination and a drive to see the removal of everything that is and has been defiled. All aspects of my life which have been defiled I want removed, because I want to bring in the new. I want to bring Christ into my life and rededicate myself to His dwelling within me as the temple of the Holy Spirit.

When we go on to First Corinthians 6:19–20, it says, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." We are to keep ourselves. Once we are saved, that is not the end of it. We must keep ourselves; and it takes an aggressive energy to protect ourselves from defilement, or when defilement happens, to cleanse ourselves. The Scripture says that "if we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us of that sin." But it also goes on to say, "and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." He removes all defilement from us. He removes all those building

blocks in our life that have become tainted by whatever has touched them and brought defilement. He is faithful to cleanse us; but it takes our aggressive approach to Him.

We must come to Him and confess our sin. We must look as those did in the book of Maccabees: they walked onto the Temple Mount and they beheld what had happened to it. They looked closely to see what had been destroyed, and how it had been desecrated; then they began the process of removal. We must come before the Lord, at the beginning of this process of Hanukkah. We must evaluate what in us has been defiled, what has been tainted and touched; and then we must remove it. We must know that He is faithful; and if we come to Him and we confess and we proclaim that which must be removed, He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us of all of those things. And once that work has been done—and it is work—once that work has been done, then we have positioned ourselves for a rededication and a redetermination. Because as this Scripture says, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God?” This is all about the temple. Hanukkah is all about the Temple of God—what had happened to it, and what they did to rededicate it. And we are the temple of God, as we come to Hanukkah. We are not looking for something outside of ourselves; but we recognize that we are that, and that the Spirit of God dwells in us.

See, we are to be a holy place in which God can dwell. And God cannot dwell, Christ cannot dwell within us as a temple if we are full of defilement, if we are full of sin. If we have been tainted and we have been ruined by the sacrifice to, and the worship of, things which are idolatry, He cannot dwell in us. And just as that Temple was when they walked up and beheld it, it was devoid of God. God had left that place. Yet this is the place that God said, “I will dwell on the earth forever.” And God has promised us that He will dwell in us; but He cannot dwell in us as long as we allow that defilement to take place or to continue. Therefore, we must see this cleansing process, and we must be dedicated. We must understand who we are and what we are in God. Do we not know that we are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in us? That should mean something to us. That should create a carefulness in our hearts, minds and thinking to not allow something to defile the very dwelling place of God. He cannot allow His temple to be destroyed. He is holy, and He must dwell within holiness. We cannot tolerate the defilement and the uncleanness. We must remove all defilement and dedicate ourselves to being the dwelling place of God on this earth.

Second Corinthians 6:14–18 says, “Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,’ says the Lord. ‘And do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,’ says the Lord Almighty.”

God has promised to dwell. He said, “I will dwell in them and walk among them.” The issue of Hanukkah is the Presence of God dwelling in us and among us. They had lost the Presence of God in that day and age because of the defilement brought about by Antiochus, and by the Seleucid dynasty that was ruling over them. They had to rise up in rebellion and fight against it, and cleanse it from their midst. We must do the same in this day and age. We must fight everything that is coming into this day and coming into our lives to defile us, because what is at stake here is, will God have a place to dwell in the earth? We are to be that dwelling place. We are to be that temple. And He promised He would dwell in us and walk among us and be our God, and that we would be His people. But He says we must come out and

separate ourselves from the defilement of this age and the people of this age, and we must give ourselves. We must not touch the unclean. Then He will welcome us. Then He will dwell in us, and dwell among us; and He will be a Father to us, and we will be sons and daughters to Him.

Ephesians 2:18–22 says, “For through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.” In the first verse that we read in First Corinthians 6:14, it is talking about us as individuals. But when we come to Ephesians 2, it is talking about the same principle, but it is connecting this idea to the Body. This temple that we are is not just on an individual basis. The Body of Christ is becoming the temple of God in the earth. And we must be dedicated to that, as well as being individuals in whom He can dwell. We must be dedicated to the fact that He must have a holy temple called the Body of Christ in whom He will dwell, having built us up together into that dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

This Hanukkah should be a tremendous time for all of us. There is a lot of work to do. There is a lot that can be done. But the fact that He has given us this time as a celebration, He has given us this time to enter into these promises that He can dwell in us and we can be purified, and we can give ourselves to a time where we rededicate ourselves to walk with Him and allow Him to walk in us and to dwell in us.

So, as we come to the conclusion of this podcast, I just want to remind us that in some ways, we exist as they did in the days of Maccabees—the Temple has been destroyed; many times the Temple has been defiled. And there are many people today who have either been destroyed or defiled so that they no longer qualify as a place in which God can dwell. The altar and the instruments of worship and the service had to be remade and rededicated. It is time to remake our lives in God. It is time to begin again. Remember, when someone comes into Christ, old things pass away, and new things begin. It is time to remake those instruments that we are in service to God, and then to rededicate them to the Lord. Thirdly, I would say, we must tear down the defilement before we can build anew. Let’s not pretend that we can just try to bring some new things in and do a little bit better. We have got to put the energy into tearing down and removing that which is defiled. Likewise, we must be cleansed of the defilement within ourselves, and rededicate our lives in service to the Lord in order that we might be that place in which He would dwell.

I just want to end in a prayer: Father, let us celebrate this Hanukkah with deep meaning in our lives. Let it be a time of cleansing. Let it be a time of renewal. Let it be a time of change. Let it be a time of rededication. We ask You, Yeshua, to come into our lives, to remove the old. Old things must pass away, and new things must be imparted to us that we must be given to, to bless and dedicate ourselves to walk in this age. We know that we may have walked with You for years, but that is not enough. We must walk with You today. And that takes a new dedication. We ask You for Your grace and Your help to celebrate this Hanukkah as a new day of new beginnings and new dedication. Amen.