

# THE FEAST OF DEDICATION

Text: John 10:22-23

Introduction:

1. The feasts commanded by God were physical observances that had mental and emotional benefits.
2. However, there were other feasts celebrated by the children of Israel that were not commanded by the Lord.
3. Instead, they were based on historical events and gained cultural influence.
4. Technically, they are not “Bible feasts.”
5. Yet, there is reference to them or the events surrounding them in Scripture.

- I. The Feast of Dedication (1 Maccabees 4:36, 59)
  - A. After the death of Alexander the Great (323 BC), for the next 100 years Judah was ruled by the Ptolemies of Egypt.
  - B. As prophesied by Daniel, the sons of the King of Syria fought against Egypt (Daniel 11:10).
    1. One of these sons was Antiochus the Great.
    2. He regained control over Syria and sought to conquer Egypt.
    3. He was defeated by Egypt and by Rome.
  - C. When Antiochus the Great was defeated by Rome, he was forced to surrender his son as a hostage.
  - D. For 12 years, Antiochus IV (who would come to be known as Epiphanes) was exiled as a captive in Rome.
    1. Epiphanes means, “The illustrious.”
    2. The people of Judah called him Epimanes – “the madman.”
  - E. When he returned to Syria, he usurped the throne and became ruler over Judah.
  - F. He removed the High Priest, stopped the daily sacrifices, and began the Hellenization of Jewish culture (cf. Daniel 8:9-14).
  - G. After attacking Egypt and suffering defeat from Rome a second time, an enraged Antiochus attacked Jerusalem (cf. Daniel 11:21-45).
    1. This began a period of tremendous persecution of Israel.
    2. The Jews were forced to cease the practice of circumcision, destroy copies of the Old Law, and offer sacrifices to idols.
  - H. In time, a man named Mattathias led a rebellion against Antiochus.
  - I. After one year, he died and was succeeded by his son Judas who came to be known as the Maccabee – “the hammer.”
  - J. Soon, Judas and his soldiers liberated Jerusalem and began the process of cleansing and rededicating the Temple.
  - K. It is this event that is remembered in the Feast of Dedication – Hanukkah is the Hebrew word for “dedication.”

## Bible Feasts

- II. The Festival of Lights (1 Maccabees 4:49-51)
- A. It was on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of the month Kislev that the dedication of the Temple was celebrated (early December, 164 BC).
  - B. The celebration lasted for eight days.
  - C. Tradition states that there was a miraculous occurrence at this feast:
    - 1. According to legend, when the lampstand was to be lit in the Temple, only one container of pure, undefiled oil was found.
    - 2. It contained only enough oil to light the lamps for one day.
    - 3. However, each day when it came time to light the candlestick, enough oil was found for that day.
    - 4. This continued for eight days until fresh oil could be produced.
  - D. Because of this, the Feast of Dedication is also known as the Festival of Lights.
  - E. In the dark days of winter, the Temple and the homes in Judah would be filled with light.
    - 1. An additional candle or lamp was to be lit each night until there were eight lights burning on the last day of the feast.
    - 2. This was to be done for each person in the household.
  - F. They brought branches and palms to the Temple where they sang praises to God for His deliverance and provision (2 Maccabees 10:1-8).
- III. The Light of the World (John 10:22-42)
- A. The only mention of this feast in Scripture is in John 10:22-23.
  - B. The Bible simply states that at the time of the Feast of Dedication, Jesus was in Jerusalem.
    - 1. Furthermore, it was winter, therefore Jesus walked in Solomon's porch at the Temple.
    - 2. It is not stated that Jesus was observing this feast.
    - 3. It is possible that He kept it culturally, but not religiously.
    - 4. There is no evidence that the miracle claimed actually occurred at the dedication of the Temple.
  - C. However, Jesus used the opportunity of the feast to proclaim His deity.
  - D. He had previously declared, "I am the Light of the World" (John 8:12; 9:5).
  - E. Now, He declares that He is one with the Father – a claim which caused His listeners to want to execute Him!
  - F. Furthermore, He presented His works as evidence of His claim.
  - G. At a feast celebrating light in midst of darkness, Jesus presented Himself as the light that conquers spiritual darkness – the Messiah and Savior.