**Calgary L’chaim Bible Fellowship**

www.lechaimbiblefellowship.org

Text: Isaiah 9:6-7 Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**The Christmas Connection**

Many are captivated by the excessive materialism of this season and they simply do not understand God’s true purpose of the “reason for the season.” The message of an all-powerful God setting aside His power and humbled Himself by becoming a servant is now turned to the belief of the commercialized semi-god Santa Clause. How far we have drifted from worshiping the One who was humbly born to die that sinners like you and me might live!

There is much for us to learn about the Christmas holiday!

There is another holiday celebration I want to mention. Although this one has gifts, it lacks Santas and reindeer. But those who celebrate it believe that the beautiful, lighted candles are enough. It is Hanukkah–the Feast of Dedication–that celebrates the victory of the Jewish freedom fighters over the evil Antiochus Epiphanes of the Syrian-Greek Empire. Did you know that there is actually a strong connection between Christmas and Hanukkah?

Most people do not know what one holiday has to do with the other. Yet these two great holidays are interestingly “connected” the link goes much further than the giving of presents, the lighting of candles and the times of family togetherness we enjoy during this season.

*You see, without Hanukkah, there would be no Christmas.*

**A Story of Redemption and Sacrifice**

Antiochus (215-164 BC), who was nicknamed “The Madman,” felt threatened by the Jewish people and decided to turn the Jews into good Greeks. He demanded that the Jewish people bow down to his statue, worship him as a Greek god incarnate and submit to his authority. Now, some of the Jewish leaders may have been willing to accept his political authority, but they could never accept his religious authority. The Jews hated idols and would never bow down to one-and they could never believe that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was incarnated in the person of Antiochus Epiphanes!

The Jews who lived in a town called Modiin rebelled, under the leadership of Mattathias, a Levite who along with his son Judah Maccabee led a grassroots rebellion from about 167 to 165 BC. The Maccabees fought hard and finally took Jerusalem and the Temple back in great victory.

Redemption and sacrifice are key concepts in the Hanukkah celebration, for the victory came at great cost.

According to later Jewish tradition, after the victory the Maccabees only had enough olive oil to fuel the eternal light in the Temple for one day–but it took eight days to crush the olives and prepare the oil. The miracle of Hanukkah is this: the oil, which should have only lasted one day, lasted for eight. This is why we celebrate Hanukkah for eight days.

Yet the real miracle of Hanukkah is not the miracle of the lights, but the fact that God once again preserved His chosen people against all odds! The Lord kept His promise to Israel that they would not be destroyed (Jeremiah 31:35-37, Romans 11:29). God preserved His people because He had chosen them for a glorious purpose that was yet to be fulfilled!

**The Best Was – and Is – to Come**

The best was yet to come. Almost 200 years later, God sent His final and ultimate Word of redemption and sacrifice–Jesus the Messiah–to purchase the salvation of Jews and Gentiles with His own life.

If God had not enabled the Maccabees to overthrow Antiochus, the Jewish people may very well have been destroyed. If the Jewish people had been destroyed, then the birth of the Savior could never have taken place!

The true link between Hanukkah and Christmas is very simple: God is faithful and always keeps His promises.

*(lifted and revised from chosen people ministries)*

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