

The celebration of **Hanukkah** focuses on the lighting of the menorah. It is a special time for families and friends to spend together singing, playing, giving gifts, telling stories, and **meditating on the meaning of Hanukkah**.

Eight Days of Hanukkah (day 3 of 8)

The Feast of Dedication and The Feast of Light

by Michael Gibson, Key2Changes.com

The True Meaning of Hanukkah The “Conception” of the Light of the World

“Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus (Yashua – I am Salvation, I am the Light of the World).” Luke 1:31

On the third night:

They have eyes but cannot see; ears, but cannot hear.

They are rebels against the light; they are strangers to its ways, and do not stay in its path.

For darkness is morning to all of them; for they are friends with the terrors of darkness.

Indeed the light of the wicked fails; the flame of his fire does not shine.

The light is his tent darkens; his lamp fails him.

They grope without light in the darkness; He make them wander as if drunk. And I will banish them from the sound of mirth and gladness, the voice of bridegroom and bride, and the sound of the handmill and the light of the lamp.

All the lights that shine in the sky I will darken above you; and I will bring darkness upon your land – declares the Lord God

Listen, you who are deaf; you blind ones; look up and see! Psalm 115:5-6; Job 24:13, 17; Job 18:5-6; 12:25; Jeremiah 25:10; Ezekiel 32:8; Isaiah 42:18

Prayer on the third night:

Daily Exercise - Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is a Latin term that means “divine reading.” It is a way or method of reading the Scriptures in such a manner that facilitates the reader in receiving a “specific word” from God. The practice was developed early in the church’s history with Origen first expressing its principles around 220 AD. The system consists of four parts: reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation. It may be practiced privately or in a small group setting. There are four elements to be considered in preparing for this exercise:

1. Set aside enough time to complete the exercise so that you don’t have to rush through it. Usually thirty minutes is adequate.
2. Find a quiet place free of distractions.
3. Read the Selected Passage Above of Scripture.
4. Transition from what you have been doing by calming you mind and body. This can be done by taking a few slow, deep breaths and inviting the Lord to speak to you through His word.

Reading

1. Read the passage aloud slowly a couple of times.
2. Be silent for one-to-two minutes.
3. Is there a word or phrase that is meaningful to you?
4. Repeat the word or phrase several times silently as if to memorize it.

* If in a group share it in turn. Do not elaborate simply state what it is.

Meditation

1. Read the passage again.
2. Be silent for two to three minutes.
3. Think about how the reading applies or touches your life today.

* If in a group share it in turn. Briefly state "I hear, I see, I feel ..."

Prayer

1. Talk with God about what he is showing you.

* If in a group pray quietly.

Contemplation

1. Read the passage again.
2. Be silent for two to three minutes.
3. Reflect on "I believe God wants me to _____ today/this week/etc."

* If in a group share in turn. At this point you can elaborate somewhat on what you believe God is telling you to do.

Study on the third night:

Why December 25th:

From the Biblical evidence presented, it appears that Jesus Christ was conceived at or near Hanukkah. So how was the date of December 25th arrived at for the birth of Jesus Christ? No one seems to know why! Most likely it was arrived at by combining several concepts.

In eastern cultures, a child's birth is considered as having occurred at his conception rather than live birth. Those living in western cultures set birth at the moment a child takes his first breath. And it is this difference that currently fuels the abortion issue on when life begins.

As Christians most of us believe that life begins at conception. Hence, this could have led church leaders to choose a December date as being that of Christ's conception.

It also might be worth mentioning that at the time of Christ's birth, Israel an eastern culture was being ruled by Rome, a western culture. The conflict of birth may have been an issue. Hence, King Herod made a safe choice by eliminating all the children in the Bethlehem area under the age of two years.

The feast of Hanukkah begins on Kislev 25 of the Jewish calendar. The month Kislev is most closely associated with our month of December. Hence church leaders could have simply transposed the date from one calendar to another.

Confusion over dates and times connected with Biblical events has always been a problem for people raised in western cultures. The Jewish people use a lunar calendar and base their time references on what God told them to do. Western societies use a solar calendar and base their time references on those established by the Romans. Hence the reconciliation of the two calendars is difficult at best.

Church leaders knew that Hanukkah was an eight-day Feast of Light that began on the 25th. They also knew that the 25th was the birth date of the pagan god Mithras, conqueror of the darkness. And his birth date fell within the feast of Saturnalia, which was a weeklong celebration of the renewal of the sun at the winter solstice.

Recognizing that Jesus Christ was the true light sent from heaven to enlighten a dark world, church leaders may have considered it convenient to substitute one feast for the other since their themes were similar. That way it would be easy to explain to pagans the good news of Jesus Christ.

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"Both Mithras and Christ were described variously as 'the Way,' 'the Truth,' 'the Light,' 'the Life,' 'the Word,' 'the Son of God,' 'the Good Shepherd.' The Christian litany to Jesus could easily be an allegorical litany to the sun-god. Mithras is often represented as carrying a lamb on his shoulders, just as Jesus is. Midnight services were found in both religions. The virgin mother . . . was easily merged with the virgin mother Mary. Petra, the sacred rock of Mithraism, became Peter, the foundation of the Christian Church."

Gerald Berry, Religions of the World

"Mithra or Mitra is . . . worshipped as Itu (Mitra-Mitu-Itu) in every house of the Hindus in India. Itu (derivative of Mitu or Mitra) is considered as the Vegetation-deity. This Mithra or Mitra (Sun-God) is believed to be a Mediator between God and man, between the Sky and the Earth. It is said that Mithra or [the] Sun took birth in the Cave on December 25th. It is also the belief of the Christian world that Mithra or the Sun-God was born of [a] Virgin. He travelled far and wide. He has twelve satellites, which are taken as the Sun's disciples . . . [The Sun's] great festivals are observed in the Winter Solstice and the Vernal Equinox - Christmas and Easter. His symbol is the Lamb . . ."

Swami Prajnanananda, *Christ the Saviour and Christ Myth*

Mithra^{*}, known as the pagan Christ, came along into Indian/Asian culture nearly 600 years before Jesus, but only as a story of the origin of the Sun, born in a Cave, to bring inner-light into the world. It was not until the late third to late fourth century that the religion of Mithraism became popular amongst the pagan worshipers, which included a very influential leader by the name Constantine I, a Roman Emperor who ruled between 306 and 337 AD, who came into the Christian Faith, with both military and political power, beginning to single handedly change the face and doctrine of Christianity^{*}. A former pagan Sun worshiper himself, Constantine I took his former pagan ways, which included this worship of the many pagan gods, not excluding the god, Mithra, who began to evolve (The Many Faces of Mithra)^{*} into a carbon copy of Christianity, from his origin of being born from a rock in a cave, to the story developing to him being birthed from a virgin, some 800 years later.

^{*} The god is found as "Mithra" in the Indian Vedic religion (The **Vedas** are a collection of hymns and other ancient religious texts written in India between about 1500 and 1000 BCE.), which is over 3,500 years old, by conservative estimates. When the Iranians separated from their Indian brethren (400 years after the life of Moses).

^{*} Single handedly change the face and doctrine of Christianity, Constantine I, declared religious tolerance for Christianity in the Roman empire. He called the First Council of Nicaea in 325, which produced the statement of Christian belief known as the Nicene Creed. In regards to Public cults, Constantine I adapted to the common-day pagan cults for useful ideas and marketing strategies to advance his world dominance, including Mithraism being absorbed by the Romans, under his leadership, during their military campaigns.

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^{*} The Many Faces of Mithra: this development of gods taking on different forms, shapes, colors, ethnicities and other attributes according to location, era and so on is not only quite common but also the norm. Thus, we have hundreds of gods and goddesses who are in many ways interchangeable but who have adopted various differences based on geographical and environmental factors . . . Over the centuries, Mithraism has been compared to Christianity, revealing numerous similarities between the two faiths' doctrines and traditions, including as concerns stories of their respective godmen. Mithra has the following in common with the Jesus character:

- Mithra was born on December 25th^{*} of the virgin Anahita^{*}.
- The babe was wrapped in swaddling clothes, placed in a manger and attended by shepherds.
- He was considered a great traveling teacher and master.
- He had 12 companions^{*} or "disciples".
- He performed miracles.
- As the "great bull of the Sun," Mithra sacrificed himself for world peace.
- He ascended to heaven.
- Mithra was viewed as the Good Shepherd, the "Way, the Truth and the Light," the Redeemer, the Savior, the Messiah.
- Mithra is omniscient, as he "hears all, sees all, knows all: none can deceive him."
- He was identified with both the Lion and the Lamb.
- His sacred day was Sunday, "the Lord's Day", hundreds of years before the appearance of Christ.
- His religion had a eucharist or "Lord's Supper."
- Mithra "sets his marks on the foreheads of his soldiers."
- Mithraism emphasized baptism.

^{*} The Mithraists believed that this night (December 25th) is the night of the birth of Mithra, Persian god of light and truth. At the morning of the longest night of the year the Mithra is born . . . The observation was thus provably taken over by Christianity, not as biblical doctrine but as a later tradition in order to compete with the Pagan cults, a move we contend occurred with numerous other "Christian" motifs, including many that *are* in the New Testament. (<http://www.truthbeknown.com/mithra.htm>)

^{*} The Virgin Mother Anahita: Unlike various other rock- or cave-born gods, Mithra is not depicted in the Roman cultus as having been given birth by a mortal woman or a goddess; hence, it is claimed that he was not "born of a virgin." (<http://www.truthbeknown.com/mithra.htm>)

^{*} The theme of the teaching god and "the Twelve" is found within Mithraism, as Mithra is depicted as surrounded by the 12 zodiac signs on a number of monuments and in the writings of Porphyry (4.16), for one. These 12 signs are sometimes portrayed as *humans* and, as they have been in the case of numerous sun gods, could be called Mithra's 12 "companions" or "disciples". (<http://www.truthbeknown.com/mithra.htm>)

The Indian Mitra was essentially a solar deity, representing the "friendly" aspect of the sun; the bestower of health, wealth and food. His worship purified and freed the devotee from sin and disease. Eventually, Mithra became more militant, and he is best known as a warrior. Like so many gods, Mithra was the light and power behind the sun. By the Roman legionnaires, Mithra or *Mithras*, as he began to be known in the Greco-Roman world - was called "the divine Sun, the Unconquered Sun". He was said to be "Mighty in strength, mighty ruler, greatest king of gods! O Sun, lord of heaven and earth, God of Gods!" Mithra was also deemed "the mediator" between heaven and earth, a role often ascribed to the god of the sun. (*The Roman cult seems to have taken this existing association and developed it in their own special way.* (Gordon, "FAQ." (Emph. added.))

Mithraism, also known as the Mithraic mysteries, was a Roman mystery religion centered on the god Mithras. The religion was inspired by Iranian worship of the Zoroastrian god Mithra, though the Greek *Mithras* was linked to a new and distinctive imagery, and the level of continuity between Persian and Greco-Roman practice is debated. The mysteries were popular among the Roman military from about the 1st to the 4th century CE . . . viewed as a rival of early Christianity* . . . From this evidence we know that the cult was the last of the important mystery cults to evolve and that it thrived in the second and third centuries AD and waned in the fourth as elite patronage was gradually transferred to Christianity . . . In the 4th century, Mithraists faced persecution from Christians and the religion was subsequently suppressed and eliminated in the empire by the end of the century; . . . No written narratives or theology from the religion survive . . . Interpretation of the physical evidence remains problematic and contested.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mithraism>

*“And He said, “See to it that you be not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He,’ (‘I am the Christ’) and, ‘The time is at hand’; do not go after them.” **Matthew 24:4-8, Mark 13:5-8, Luke 21:8-11**

“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ,’ or ‘There He is,’ do not believe him. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you in advance. If therefore they say to you, ‘Behold, He is in the wilderness,’ do not go forth, or, ‘Behold, He is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe them. For just as the lightening comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.” **Matthew 24:23-28, Mark 13:21-23**

*“The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.” **John 1:9***