*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****.*

**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**

**Hanukkah (day 1 of 8)**

## The Feast of Dedication and The Feast of Light

**Introduction:**

By doing a study of Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication and the feast of Light, many hidden truths concerning our Lord Jesus Christ can be discovered. The feast brings the Old and New Testaments of our Bible together in unique ways that glorify God’s son. It helps teaches us about His conception, His live birth, and His body, the church. Although the feast of Hanukkah originated many years ago, it continually points those who understand its truths to future prophetic events.

The fourfold purpose of this teaching is:

1. To describe what the Feast of Dedication is.
2. To tell the story behind its origination.
3. To connect it to our Christmas story about Jesus’ birth, and
4. To present observations about the Temple’s seven-branched golden lampstand and its light.

Let’s begin our study by remembering that Jesus attended Hanukkah (John 10:22-39) in Jerusalem just a few months prior to His death. And while He was at the feast Jesus actually declared Himself to be the Son of God ... the Light of the world.

**On the first night:**

*The earth was unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep . . . God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night . . .*

*God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate day from night; they shall serve as signs for the set times – the days and the years; and they shall serve as lights in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth.” And it was so. God made the two great lights, the greater light to dominate the day and the lesser light to dominate the night, and the stars. And God set them in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth, to dominate the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that this was good.* **(Genesis 1:2-5; 14-18)**

**Prayer on the first 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 first night:**

**Jewish Name and Meaning:**

The Jewish name Hanukkah means **dedication**. The word in its various forms appears many times in the Old Testament portion of our Bible. It was used to describe the first use, the initiation, inauguration or dedication of a house, an altar or a priest. The word Hanukkah was used for the dedication of the Tabernacle in the wilderness by Moses, the dedication of the altar in Solomon’s Temple, and the dedication of the Second Temple and wall around Jerusalem in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. It is closely associated with consecration and anointing with oil. The verb form (Chanak) of the word also means to instruct or to **train** **up**. In Proverbs 22:6 it says, “*Train up a child in the way he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it.”*

### **The Feast:**

The feast itself commemorates the re-dedication of the Temple and its altar to God in the year 164 BCE (BCE means “Before Common Era” and is used by Jewish people like we use BC or “Before Christ”). Hanukkah is not described in the Old Testament portion of our Bibles because that portion ended with the prophet Malachi in 398 BCE. However, there are an additional fourteen books called the Old Testament Apocrypha. These books were written during the “400” silent years between Malachi and the birth of Jesus Christ. Although the Apocrypha is not included in the canon of Scripture it can be found in the “Catholic Bible”. The historical account of Hanukkah is found in the book, 1 Maccabees 4:36-61.

Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication starts on the 25th of Kislev and lasts for **eight** days. That date varies according to our calendar from November 27th to December 27th. Hanukkah is also known as the Feast of **Light**, as God miraculously provided enough oil to keep the lamps on the seven-branched golden lampstand burning for the entire eight days of the feast.

During the eight-day feast period of Hanukkah, Jewish people read the book of Numbers chapters seven through eight in their synagogues. Chapter seven tells of Moses and the leaders of Israel anointing and consecrating the Tabernacle, its altars, and furnishings. Chapter eight deals with setting up the seven-branched golden lampstand and setting the Levites apart for sacred service.

**The Story Behind The Feast:**

During the reign of Alexander, the Great (356 – 323 BCE) the Greeks conquered the known Biblical world (The “known Biblical world” is the area around the Mediterranean Sea. It stretched from India to France.). The Grecian period of influence lasted until 44 BCE when it was replaced by the Roman Empire. During their period of rule the Greeks forced their society, which was called Hellenism, upon the conquered people. It included their language, philosophy, religion, culture and governmental structure. The **goal** of Hellenism was a one-world order.

After Alexander the Great died, the Grecian empire was divided between his four generals: Cassander ruled in Macedon and Greece, Lysimachus in Asia Minor and Thrace, Ptolemy in Egypt and Seleucus in Mesopotamia and Persia. These four generals are referred to in the book of Daniel 8:8 and 11:4 (The Kingdom of Greece as a world power is described in Daniel chapters eight and eleven.).

One on Seleucus’ descendents, Antiochus IV, ruled the Seleucid Empire (The territory included the northern and eastern portions of the Grecian Empire.) from 175 – 163 BCE. As king, he was very high on himself and even took the title “Epiphanes” which means “God Manifest.” Antiochus, the villain in the story of the feast of Hanukkah, is the “little horn” or “despicable person” spoken of in Daniel 8:9 and 11:21. He is a “type” of the Antichrist who is to come and his story and character become intermingled with the Antichrist’s in Daniel 8:9-12, 23-25, and 11:21-45. Similar events will occur at the time 0of Antichrist and the Great Tribulation.

Antiochus IV was the “supreme” Hellenizer and forced his one-world societal views on all of his subjects. The Hellenization of the Jews began in 173 BCE when Antiochus conspired with the Jewish High Priest at the time whose name was Jesus. This Jesus changed his name to Jason, a Greek name. Then in 169 BCE, Antiochus despoiled the Temple by taking its golden altar, lampstand, table of showbread, and the gold in the treasury to finance his campaigns.

Serious Hellenistic reform took place 167 BCE when a decree was issued for everyone in the empire to become one people by abandoning their own laws and religion. The Jews were forbidden from attending services in the Temple, participating in Sabbath and feast days, reading or possessing the Scriptures and circumcising their children. The penalty for failure to obey these laws was death!

On the 15th of Kislev in 167 BCE, Antiochus set up the “abomination of **desolation**” in the temple and built an altar on top of the existing altar of burnt offerings. No one knows for sure what this abomination was but many scholars have concluded that it was probably a statue of Zeus with Antiochus’ face on it. Antiochus’ desecration of the Temple was only a “type” of the “Abomination of Desolation” that is to come spoken of by Jesus Christ in His Olivet Discourse.

On the 25th of Kislev Antiochus sacrificed a pig on the altar and dedicated the temple to Zeus.

During this time a woman named Hannah and her seven sons were martyred for their faith. Each of the seven sons was asked in turn to bow to an idol or eat pork. Each son refused the request, professed his faith in God, and then was murdered. Upon refusal of the seventh son, both he and his mother were murdered.

A short time later, one of Antiochus’ representatives entered the town of Modin to enforce the decree upon its people. He commanded one of the Jews to make a sacrifice to a foreign God. Then a priest named Mattathias Maccabees stepped forward and killed both of them thereby initiating a revolt. He led the revolt until his death later that year. Then, Judas Maccabees (The family name, Maccabees means “hammerer”.), one of Matthias’ five sons, took command of the resistance.

In a two-year span Judas won four major battles against superior Syrian forces and took control of Jerusalem in 164 BCE. He refurnished the temple with its furniture and utensils. Then he tore down the stones that covered the Lord’s altar and had them buried. On the 25th of Kislev in 164 BCE, Judas rededicated the temple to God, exactly three years after Antiochus dedicated it to Zeus. He ordered a feast for the occasion, which lasted eight days and became known as Hanukkah.

When the temple was rededicated on the 25th of Kislev, the lamps on the seven-branched golden lampstand were lit providing the only light in the temple. However, when the lamps were lit only one jar of sacred olive oil could be found that was not polluted because the seal of the high priest on it had not been broken. A jar of oil was only enough to keep the lamps burning for one day. Yet the lamps miraculously stayed burning for the entire eight days of the feast until more oil could be prepared and dedicated. That is why Hanukkah is also called the Feast of Light.

An interesting sidebar to this story is that Judas Maccabees was killed in a battle in 160 BCE and his brother assumed the leadership of Israel until 142 BCE. From the Maccabees came the Hasmonean line of rulers in Israel, who eventually became Hellenized themselves and oppressed their own people. King Herod the Great defeated them in 37 BCE and established his own line of rulers.

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

**Hanukkah (day 2 of 8)**

## The Feast of Dedication and The Feast of Light

**On the second night:**

*Woe to those who call evil good and good evil; who present darkness as light and light as darkness; who present bitter as sweet and sweet as bitter!*

*Woe to those who are so wise – in their own opinion; so clever – in their own judgment!*

*Woe to those who are so heroic – as drinkers of wine, and so valiant – as mixers of drink!*

*Who vindicate him who is in the wrong in return for a bride, and withhold vindication from him who is right.*

*Assuredly, as straw is consumed by a tongue of fire and hay shrivels as it burns, their stock shall become like rot, and their buds shall blow way like dust.*

*For they have rejected the instruction of the Lord of Hosts, spurned the word of the Holy One of Israel.* **(Isaiah 5:20-24)**

**Prayer on the second night:**

**Daily Exercise - Lectio Divina (**“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.**)**

1. Set aside enough time to complete the exercise so that you don’t have to rush through it. Usually thirty minutes is adequate.
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**Meditation**

1. Read the passage again.

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\* 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 second night:**

**The Christmas Connection:**

One of the unusual traditions that are celebrated at the feast of Hanukkah is that women always light the lamps on the menorah. The reason for this is that the rabbis (learned teachers) have said, “Women are obligated to light the Hanukkah lamps for they took part in the miracle.” For the basis of this tradition they cite the Apocryphal book of Judith. But can this be? Lets do a quick summary of the story.

The story takes place according to most scholars around 650 BCE, almost 500 years before the actual commemoration of the feast itself. The story indicates the Jewish people are at war with the Assyrians (Syrians). Judith, a Jewish woman enters one of their camps. The general of the Syrian army desires her so she prepares a feast of cheese for him. Since cheese makes a person thirsty, the general drinks a lot of wine to slake his thirst and consequently falls asleep. While he is sleeping Judith beheads him. In the morning the Jews attack the Syrian army with the general’s head on a pole and the Syrians flee. It is a great story, but how does it show that a woman takes place in the miracle of the lamps being lit or staying lit? The rabbis can’t explain it!

However, there is one woman who qualifies to light the menorah lamps because she took part in a miracle of light ... the Virgin Mary. She brought the true light into the world and that light has continued to burn. Its all part of what we call the Christmas Story. Most Christians are familiar with the basic storyline but we’ll take a more in depth look at this miracle. Before we begin though, I’ll try to explain why we celebrate Jesus’ birth on December 25th.

In the first 200 years of Christian history, there is no mention of the date of Jesus’ birth (The first recorded mention of Jesus’ birth date is 336 CE.). During that time the early church fathers considered a person’s date of death worthy of celebration in view of the way he lived his life. Therefore, the date of Jesus’ death was of most worthy commemoration.

It wasn’t until the 3rd and 4th centuries that the idea of fixing the date of Christ’s birth came into being. And with it came heated controversy among the church leaders. Origen (185 – 254 CE) strongly recommended against such an innovation. He said, “In the Scriptures, no one is recorded to have kept a feast or held a great banquet on his birthday. It is only sinners who make great rejoicings over the day in which they were born into the world.”

During the 3rd and 4th centuries, various groups proposed eight specific dates during six different months for Jesus’ birth. These dates were: January 6th, March 28th, April 2nd, the 24th or 25th day of Pharmuthi (April/May), 25th day of Pachon (about May), May 20th, November 18th, and December 25th. The Eastern Church chose January 6th (January 6th is called Epiphany (Appearing) but was first observed as the date of Jesus’ baptism.) … a date the Greeks had celebrated as the birth of the god Dionysus and the Egyptians as the birth of the god Osiris. Pagans commonly celebrated the birthdays of their gods, however in the Bible a birthday is never celebrated to the true God, who being eternal has no birth or day of origin

Although one of the last dates to be proposed, December 25th was the one finally accepted by the leadership of the Western Church (The Armenian Church uses January 6th and the Eastern Orthodox Church uses January 7th.). It was made popular by Pope Liberius in 354 CE and became the rule in the West when the first “Christ mass” was officiated by Pope Sixtus III. December 25th coincides with the pagan feast day of *Dies Natalis Solis Invicti* or “Birthday of the Unconquered Sun” which was celebrated as the birth of the god, Mithras, “the conqueror of darkness.” This day fell within the Roman weeklong celebration of Saturnalia, a feast honoring the renewal of the sun at the winter solstice (The winter solstice is the shortest day of the year.).

As to the year of Jesus’ birth it too is the subject of much debate. In 525 CE, Pope John 1 commissioned the scholar Dionysius Exiguus to establish a feast calendar for the Church. Unfortunately, because of insufficient historical data at the time he arrived at a date at least a few years later than the actual event. The Gospels record Jesus’ birth as occurring during the reign of Herod the Great. Herod’s death according to the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus occurred in the spring of 4 BCE. Therefore, Christ’s birth had to take place before that date.

Most current Biblical scholars using modern research methods are in agreement that Jesus’ birth occurred in either the months of September or October, at or near the feast of Tabernacles in one of the years of 5 or 4 BCE. With that as a basis, the Virgin Mary would have conceived Jesus during the feast of Hanukkah in the previous year.

The four primary evidences presented in the case of Jesus’ birth are as follows:

1. He was born in the years 5 or 4 BCE.
	1. Based on the date of Herrod’s death (This date has been contested with some suggesting a date of January 29, 1 BCE as the date of Herod’s death. The evidence for his death is based on the observance of a lunar eclipse prior to his death. There were observable lunar eclipses only in the years 5 BCE, 4 BCE and 1BCE.).
	2. Herrod’s killing of children under two years of age.
	3. Jesus’ age at his baptism and the beginning of His ministry in connection with the known dates of Tiberius Caesar’s reign.
	4. Jesus death fulfilling the Passover on the correct days.
2. The census of Quirinius.
	1. The census required everyone to travel to his own city. This would not have occurred during winter.
	2. Since it involved taxation it would have naturally occurred near the end of the harvest season in late summer or early autumn.
3. The shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. It is generally agreed that this would never occur after October 31 due to the cold temperatures.
4. The evidence surrounding the birth of John the Baptist.
	1. Zechariah, John the Baptist’s father was a priest in the line of Abijah, which stood eighth in the order of service. Each of the twenty-four lines of priests served twice a year in their order beginning on the first day of the month Aviv (Aviv is the first month of God’s calendar. It falls within our March/April time frame. The Jewish people currently call this month Nisan.). All the priests served an additional week at each of the three feasts that all the men of Israel were required to attend: Unleavened Bread, Weeks and Tabernacles.
	2. Therefore Zechariah would have been serving on the 10th week or about mid June.
	3. Zechariah and Elizabeth conceived John the Baptist after the angel spoke to Zechariah while he was serving.
	4. It appears that John the Baptist was born at or near Passover the following year.
	5. Each year during the Passover meal a special cup of wine (the Cup of Elijah) is set apart awaiting the return of the Prophet Elijah. This is done in accordance with the last two verses in the Old Testament from the prophet Malachi 4:5-6. They read, *“Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.”*

When the angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah in the Temple he used very similar words concerning Zechariah’s future son, John the Baptist. The angel said, *“And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”* (Luke 1:16-17)

On the Mount of Transfiguration, three of Jesus’ disciples saw Moses and Elijah. After that they asked Jesus about the coming of Elijah. *“Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” And He answered and said, “Elijah is coming and will restore all things; but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.” Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.”* (Matthew 17:10-13)

* 1. John the Baptist, Jesus’ cousin was born six months prior to Jesus. Therefore, Jesus would have been born in September or October at or near the feast of Tabernacles.

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

**Hanukkah (day 3 of 8)**

## The Feast of Dedication and The Feast of Light

**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 bridgegroom 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 – declaars 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 (**“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.**)**

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.
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**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.

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**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 Herrod 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 Mitras, 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.

**The Christmas Story:**

Based on my knowledge of Scripture, historical facts, the Biblical calendar and Jewish tradition I would like to present the following Christmas story as a plausible way in which the events surrounding Jesus’ birth occurred.

It is Saturday night, Kislev 25, in the Jewish year 3755. It is the first night of Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication and the Feast of Light, December 4, 6 BCE. The angel Gabriel comes to the Virgin Mary with a message from God. She will conceive in her womb, bear a son and name him Jesus (Yashua – Joshua – “I AM SALVATION”). The Holy Spirit will come upon her, and the power of the Most High will overshadow her; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.

Mary appropriately Hanukkahs (dedicates – first use for a holy purpose) her body to be the temple of God by saying, *"Behold, the bondslave of the Lord; be it done to me according to your* ***word****."*

*The Holy Spirit impregnates Mary. She now has the Word of God, eternal life and the light of men dwelling in the darkness of her womb. As it is written:* In the beginning was the **Word**, and the **Word** was with God, and the **Word** was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was **life**, and the **life** was the **light** of men. And the **light** shines in the **darkness**, and the **darkness** did not comprehend it. *(John 1:1-5)*

Interestingly, on the first night of Hanukkah many Jews quote this passage of Scripture, *“In the beginning God* ***created*** *the heavens and the earth. And the earth was* ***formless*** *and* ***void****, and* ***darkness*** *was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, "****Let there be light"; and there was light****.” (Genesis 1:1-3)*

Coincidently we are reminded by the Scripture in John 10:22-39, that Jesus declared Himself to be the Son of God on Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication and Light in the Temple at Jerusalem.

Forty weeks (Forty weeks is the period of human gestation.) after His conception Jesus is born. It is Friday night, Elul 9, in the Jewish year 3756. This corresponds to our Gregorian calendar date of September 9, 5 BCE. It is the beginning of the weekly Sabbath. The Jewish people have a particular name for every Sabbath and they read specific passages of Scripture on those Sabbaths. The one on which Jesus is born is called KiTeitzei, “When you go out”. On that Sabbath night Jesus goes forth from the womb. And the next morning in the Temple and in every synagogue Isaiah 54:1-10 is read. It begins this way:

***“Shout for joy, O barren one, you who have borne no child; break forth into joyful shouting and cry aloud, you who have not travailed; for the sons of the desolate one will be more numerous than the sons of the married woman," says the LORD.***

On the following Sabbath, being the eighth day Jesus is circumcised. The Jewish people call this particular Sabbath, KiTavo, “When you enter”. On that day Jesus entered into the Mosaic Covenant through His circumcision. And in the Temple and every synagogue the prophet Isaiah 60:1-22 is read. It begins this way:

***Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth, and deep darkness the peoples; but the LORD will rise upon you, and His glory will appear upon you. And nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes round about, and see; they all gather together, they come to you.***

And in verse six of that passage of Scripture it prophesies the coming of the Magi to see Jesus. It reads this way:

*A multitude of camels will cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba will come; they will bring* ***gold*** *and* ***frankincense****, and will bear* ***good news*** (**myrrh - a sweet smelling aroma**) *of the praises of the LORD.*

Mary waited the prescribed 40 days for her purification (Read Leviticus 12:1-4) from the blood of childbirth before presenting her son, Jesus at the Temple. It was Thursday, Ethanim (Ethanim is the seventh month of God’s calendar. It falls within our September/October time frame. The Jewish people currently call this month Tishri.) 21, of the Jewish year 3756 or our October 20, 5 BCE. The Jewish people call the day Hossana Rabba or “The Great Day of Salvation”. It is the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (In Hebrew the feast is called Sukkoth, which is translated as tent, hut, tabernacle or booth and indicates a temporary dwelling.) (Sukkoth).

The Feast of Tabernacles is the most joyous feast of the year for Israel and it has four major themes associated with it. Lets see how these four themes are linked to Jesus’ first appearance at the Temple.

The first theme is the **ingathering of various tree branches**. Jesus, “the **Branch**” spoken of by Isaiah the prophet (Isaiah 11:1-10) concerning the messiah is brought into Jerusalem during the feast. It was written of Him: *“Then a* ***shoot*** *will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a* ***branch*** *from his roots will bear fruit.”*

Jesse was King David’s father. Therefore, the messiah had to be a descendent of King David, which Jesus was according to the genealogies. The shoot or branch in the prophecy can also be rendered from the root Hebrew word Nazir meaning “unpruned vine” from whence we get the word Nazarene. This is why the Bible references Jesus as the Nazarene or Jesus from Nazareth.

The second theme of the feast is **God comes to tabernacle or dwell with His people.** For the past week,all the Jewish people had been living in temporary dwellings or booths made out of tree branches. It was meant to remind them of the Exodus, when God’s presence was manifest among His people, leading and protecting them day and night. Jesus arrives among the people as **Immanuel … “God With Us”** to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14. *“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.*

The third theme of the feast is **the salvation of God’s people.** The angel commanded Joseph to name the child, Jesus because He would save His people from their sins. In Hebrew, Jesus’ name is Yashua or Joshua, which means, “**I AM salvation**”. God told Moses to tell the Israelites that “I AM” (Exodus 3:14) had sent him to deliver them from the Egyptians. In today’s world we just hear a person’s formal name and it has no particular meaning to us. But in Jesus’ day peoples name were actual statements. So every time Jesus introduced Himself, the people heard the statement, “**I AM salvation**”.

The fourth theme of the feast is **great joy**. While the people were rejoicing in God outside the Temple, Jesus was presented before God, in the Temple, as was the custom. At that time old Simeon and Anna were filled with the **joy of the Holy Spirit** and began prophesying because they had seen the consolation of Israel.

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

**Hanukkah (day 4 of 8)**

## The Feast of Dedication and The Feast of Light

**On the fourth night:**

*Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what it brings forth, who gave breath to the people upon it and life to those who walk thereon:*

*I the Lord, in My grace, have summoned you, and I have taken you by the hand. I create you, and appointed you a covenant-people, a light to the nations . . .*

*Opening eyes deprived of light, rescuing prisoners from confinement, from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.*

*I form light and create darkness, I make peace and create woe . . .*

*I the Lord do all these things.*

*I will lead the blind by a road they did not know, and I will make them walk by paths they never knew. I will turn darkness before them into light, rough places into level ground. These are promises – I will keep them without fail.* **(Isaiah 42:5-7, 45:7, 42:16)**

**Prayer on the fourth night:**

**Daily Exercise - Lectio Divina (**“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.**)**

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 fourth night:**

**The Seven-branched Golden Lampstand and Its Light:**

The common name for the seven-branched golden lampstand is **menorah**. It provided the only light in the Temple of God. And it was the one in use at the first Hanukkah feast in 164 BCE.

At the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD the Romans took the seven-branched golden lampstand as a spoil. This event is depicted in a sculptured relief on the Arch of Titus in Rome. At that point the rabbis had to make another menorah to celebrate Hanukkah. Only they could not light its lamps with the fire from the altar of burnt offerings because it had been destroyed so they devised another method. This led to the development of an eight-branched menorah.

The rabbis thinking went like this. When you look at the seven-branched golden lampstand you actually see eight branches. The staff or trunk is one branch and it supports the other seven. So, since the staff is in a supporting role we call it the “Shamash” or **servant**. Therefore, let us make the Shamash an independent branch and light its lamp first from another source. Then it in turn can be used as a servant to light the remaining seven lamps. The total number of lamps represented the eight days of the feast. Later on, the shammash became a separate lamp lighting in turn eight other lamps, which represented the eight days of the feast. And this is why the Jewish people currently use a nine-branched candlestick called hanukkiah for Hanukkah today.

God gave Moses specific instructions on how to make the seven-branched golden lampstand. The lampstand with its seven lamps burning is called the Ner Tamid or “**Eternal** **Light**”. The original lampstand was probably five feet tall by three and one half feet wide and represented **a tree that was on fire but not consumed** (A lighted Christmas tree is of pagan origin but carries the same idea. It is a man-made tradition, was never ordered by God and serves as a **counterfeit** designed to keep people from the truth.). Do you remember Moses’ encounter with God at the burning bush (tree).

*The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the* ***bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed****. So Moses said, “I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight,* ***why the bush is not burned up****.” When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here ‘I am.” Then He said, “Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”* (Exodus 3:2-5)

As with Moses’ burning bush, the seven-branched golden lampstand serves as an indication of God’s presence.

From the Scriptures we know that the seven-branched golden lampstand is the representation of an **almond** tree (The instructions for making the menorah are found in Exodus 25:31-40 and 37:17-27) with its calyx, bud and flowers. And when an almond tree is in bloom with its white and pink blossoms it has the appearance of being on fire.

There are several other allusions that can be drawn from an almond tree that tie into the Scriptures. It is the **first** tree to bloom in Israel. The almond itself has the appearance of an eye and is used this way in Jeremiah 1:11-12. *“And the word of the LORD came to me saying, ‘What do you see, Jeremiah?’ And I said, ‘I see a* ***rod*** *of an* ***almond tree****.’ Then the LORD said to me, ‘You have seen well, for* ***I AM watching*** *over My word to perform it.’*

The almond tree is also known as the **watching** tree in Israel because the Hebrew word for almond is shaqad, meaning to be alert. And since the seven-branched golden lampstand in the Temple is an almond tree on fire you might say it is lighted to help God see. *And from the throne proceed flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And there were* ***seven lamps of fire*** *burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.* (Revelation 4:5) The seven lights are the seven spirits of God and when they are taken together as a whole represent the Holy Spirit. The number seven is the number of God and simply represents His fullness or completeness. So you might say that the Holy Spirit helps God see what is going on.

This ability to see is born out in another passage of Scripture in the book of Revelation. *And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and* ***seven eyes****, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.* (Revelation 5:6) Here the Holy Spirit is equated to having seven eyes.

The book of Revelation also brings the concepts of fire and eyes together when it speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ. *And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He* ***judges*** *and wages war.* ***His eyes are a flame of fire****, and on His head are many diadems.”*(Revelation 19:11-12)

So it is the Holy Spirit that gives God the ability to see and **judge.** And when we, as Christians, stand before the judgment seat of Christ our works will be judged through the Holy Spirit as well. For it is written: *Each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with* ***fire****, and the* ***fire*** *itself will test the quality of each man’s work.* (1 Corinthians 3:13)

Most people think the Holy Spirit is in heaven but from the book of Revelation it is clearly shown that the Holy Spirit revealed through the seven burning lamps rests upon the seven-branched golden lampstand. And that lampstand is the Church.

*Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw* ***seven golden lampstands****; and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and* ***His eyes were like a flame of fire****. His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength. When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things. As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the* ***seven golden lampstands****: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and* ***the seven lampstands are the seven churches.****”* (Revelation 1:12-20)

Although there are seven churches listed (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea.) and each appears distinct from one another, together they represent the Church as a whole. This is born out by the fact that despite its seven branches, God commanded the entire lampstand to be made out of **one piece** of beaten gold. And being made of gold, the symbol for faith (*So that the proof of your* ***faith****, being more precious than* ***gold*** *which is perishable, even though tested by* ***fire****, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ*. (1 Peter 1:7)), the Church exists because of its faith.

At this point in the lesson I want to issue you a word of caution. Just because you are a member of the Church does not make you the Light. It only means that you uphold the Light. In fact Jesus judges the Church and threatens to remove the lampstand of those who leave their first love and do not repent (Revelation 2:4-5). The Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans picked up this theme and language, except he used a fig tree instead of an almond tree.

*But if some of the branches were* ***broken off****, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich* ***root*** *of the olive tree, do not be* ***arrogant*** *toward the branches; but if you are* ***arrogant****, remember that it is not you who supports the* ***root****, but the* ***root*** *supports you. You will say then, “Branches were* ***broken off*** *so that I might be grafted in.” Quite right, they were* ***broken off*** *for their* ***unbelief****, but you stand by your* ***faith****. Do not be* ***conceited, but fear****; for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either. Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who* ***fell****, severity, but to you, God’s kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be* ***cut off****.* (Romans 11:17-22)

When we look at the seven-branched golden lampstand or an almond tree we notice one significant fact … that all the branches are **supported** by one branch that we call the shaft or trunk (root). This central shaft is representative of Jesus Christ. It is lower than the branches indicating that it is the first to come up and is humbled ... supporting all the others. Jesus said, *“I am the vine and you are the branches.”* (John 15:5)

When we view the central shaft as Jesus Christ, the Son of God we can also see that He is the branch spoken of in Isaiah and it is upon Him whom the seven spirits or Holy Spirit rests. *Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. And the Spirit of the* ***LORD***(or Spirit of Christ) *will rest on Him, the spirit of* ***wisdom*** *and* ***understanding****, the spirit of* ***counsel*** *and* ***strength****, the spirit of* ***knowledge*** *and the* ***fear*** (reverence)*of the LORD.* (Isaiah 11:1-2) In turn this branch became a tree of which Christians are a part, being members of His body.

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

**Hanukkah (day 5 of 8)**

## The Feast of Dedication and The Feast of Light

**On the fifth night:**

*Look at me, answer me, O Lord, my God!*

*Give light to my eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death.*

*Darkness is not dark for You; night is as light as day; darkness and light are the same.*

*Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant, and to his supplications, and cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord’s sake.*

*Send forth Your light and Your truth; they will lead me; they will bring me to your holy mountain, to Your dwelling-place.*

*With You is the fountain of life; by Your light do we see light.*

*It is You who light my lamp; the Lord, my God, light up my darkness.*

*The soul of a human is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the innermost parts.*

*For You have saved me from death, my foot from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life.*

*Truly, God does all these things, two, three times to a person, to bring him back from the Pit, that he may bask in the light of life.* **(Psalm 13:4; 139:12; Daniel 9:17; Psalm 43:3; 36:10; 18:20; Proverbs 20:27; Psalm 56:14; Job 33:29-30)**

**Prayer on the fifth night:**

**Daily Exercise - Lectio Divina (**“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.**)**

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 fifth night:**

**More Than A Burning Bush:**

Jesus Christ and the Church, as the seven-branched golden lampstand, which has the characteristics of an almond tree also carries with it a very special designation … **The Tree of Life**. This revelation comes from the confirmation process God used in His selection of Aaron as High Priest and his family, the Levites as priests (Numbers 17).

The story began when the Israelites complained against the leadership of Moses and Aaron. God had Moses take the staffs (A staff might be thought of as a walking stick.) of the leaders of each of the twelve tribes of Israel, wrote their names on the staffs and put them all in the Tabernacle in the presence of God. And this is what happened! *Now on the next day Moses went into the tent of the testimony; and behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi had* ***sprouted*** (calyx) *and put forth* ***buds*** (bud) *and produced* ***blossoms*** (flowers)*, and it bore ripe* ***almonds*** (fruit)*.* (Numbers 17:8) To all the Israelites amazement a dead branch had become a living tree.

In like manner, God repeats this sign in the choosing of Jesus, the dead branch come to life. *In Him was life, and the* ***life*** *was the* ***light*** *of men.* (John 1:4) Jesus is the High Priest of the order of Melchizedek and we His family are members of that priesthood. As it is written: *But you are a chosen race,* ***a royal priesthood****, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous* ***light****.* (1 Peter 2:9)

The book of Hebrews goes into great depth concerning these truths but for now let it suffice that you remember that Melchizedek (Genesis 14:17-20) was the King of Salem. His name means “King of Righteousness” and his title means “King of Peace”. Therefore, as members of this priesthood, Christians are to be ministering to others in regards to the areas of righteousness and peace.

The seven-branched golden lampstand also serves as a reminder and to shed light on all things pertaining to God. For example:

1. His **creation** in seven days: On the **first** day ... **light**. The sun, moon, and stars were not created until the fourth day. And on the last day ... rest.
2. His **light** the Church: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.
3. His **oneness**: One body, One Spirit, One hope, One Lord, One faith, One baptism, One God and Father of us all. (Ephesians 4:4-6)
4. His **appointed times** which are the seven feasts of the Lord: Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Weeks, Trumpets, Day of Atonement and Tabernacles.

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

**Hanukkah (day 6 of 8)**

## The Feast of Dedication and The Feast of Light

**On the sixth night:**

*The Lord is my light and my help whom shall I fear?*

*Bless the Lord, O my soul; O Lord, my God, You are very great; You are clothed in glory and majesty, wrapped in a robe of light; You spread the heavens like a tent cloth.*

*Your word is a lamp to my feet, a light for my path.*

*The precepts of the Lord are just, rejoicing in His heart, the instruction of the Lord is lucid, giving light to my eyes.*

*For the commandment is a lamp, and the Torah is a light.*

*Enlighten our eyes in Your Torah, attach our heart to Your commandments, unite our heart to love and revere Your name.* **(Psalm 27:1; 104:1-2; 119:105; 19:9; Proverbs 6:23)**

**Prayer on the sixth night:**

**Daily Exercise - Lectio Divina (**“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.**)**

1. Set aside enough time to complete the exercise so that you don’t have to rush through it. Usually thirty minutes is adequate.
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**Reading**

1. Read the passage aloud slowly a couple of times.

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**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 sixth night:**

**Zechariah’s Vision Of The Golden Menorah:**

The seven-branched golden lampstand plays an integral part in the Prophet Zechariah’s vision recorded in chapter four verses one through fourteen. It reads this way:

*Then the angel who was speaking with me returned, and roused me as a man who is awakened from his sleep. And he said to me, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see, and behold,* ***a lampstand all of gold with its bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps on it with seven spouts belonging to each of the lamps which are on the top of it; also two olive trees by it, one on the right side of the bowl and the other on its left side."*** *Then I answered and said to the angel who was speaking with me saying, "What are these, my lord?" So the angel who was speaking with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord." Then he answered and said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts. 'What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain; and he will bring forth the top stone with shouts of "Grace, grace to it!"'" Also the word of the LORD came to me saying, "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish it. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. "For who has despised the day of small things?* ***But these seven will be glad when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel-- these are the eyes of the LORD which range to and fro throughout the earth.****" Then I answered and said to him, "What are these two olive* *trees on the right of the lampstand and on its left?" And I answered the second time and said to him, "What are the two olive branches which are beside the two golden pipes, which empty the golden oil from themselves?" So he answered me saying, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord." Then he said, "****These are the two anointed ones, who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth.****"*(Zechariah 4:1-14)

A representation of the vision that Zechariah saw is on page 18. The oil for the lamps comes from two olive trees standing alongside the lampstand and is collected in a golden bowl at the top of the shaft. From there it flows to each of the branches. The golden bowl is part of the shaft, which is Jesus Christ, who in turn is upholding the seven branches, which are the Church. The bowl serves to connect the branches to the shaft and provides a collection place for the oil. The bowl is a representation of the heart of Christ, piping life-giving fluid to the body. In the case of the vision, it is oil to keep the lamps lit.

The two olive trees represent the sources of the supply for the oil to keep the lamps burning. These two trees are the Law and Prophets, which stand with Jesus Christ, the Word of God. Moses represents the Law in human form and Elijah represents the Prophets in human form. As Christians we know Zechariah’s vision in another form: On a high mountain (Probably Mount Hermon), Jesus is transfigured before His disciples and they see Him standing with both Moses and Elijah (Matthew 17:1-5).

These two trees can also be said to represent the following:

 **Truth**  Spirit or Love

 Domestic olive tree **Wild** olive tree

 **Israel**  Church

 The Father The **Holy** Spirit

In the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) five of them lacked sufficient oil to keep their lamps burning and were therefore considered foolish. It appears that these are the ones who do not continually persist in getting more oil from Jesus and the Scriptures, but have become **satisfied** in what they already have. They have quit asking God for more of the Spirit. *“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”* (Luke 11:13)

Although Zechariah’s vision concerns the seven-branched golden lampstand there is a major portion of the conversation within it, devoted to Zerubbabel. Who is this person and what does he have to do with the vision? Let’s take a look!

Zerubbabel, which can be translated as “one born in Babylon”, was an actual man who was born in Babylon and lived in the time of Zechariah. He was a descendant of king David and he did **lay the foundation** **for** and **finished the second temple** during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah about 520 BCE. *“The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish it. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.”* (Zechariah 4:9)

But Zechariah had a longer-term fulfillment of the prophecy in mind when he spoke those words. He was looking forward to Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the son of David who would build the Temple of God. Zechariah’s prophecy hearkens back to the time that King David wanted to build a house for God. But God replied, *“When your days are fulfilled that you must go to be with your fathers, that I will set up* ***one of your descendants*** *after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom.* ***He shall build for Me a house****, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be his father and he shall be My son; and I will not take My lovingkindness away from him, as I took it from him who was before you. But I will settle him in My house and in My kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever.”* (1 Chronicles 17:11-14) King David took this to mean that one of his sons, namely Solomon, not the Lord Jesus Christ, would build God a house. Solomon built the first Temple.

The name Zerubbabel also has another meaning, (Zerub) “seed of” (Bab El) “the gate of God”. The gate of God is God’s mouth. In other words, God spoke the word and Jesus Christ was formed in Mary’s womb. It is Christ who will build God a house. By the way, Jesus is also a descendent of Zerubbabel.

Zechariah 4:10 says, *"For who has despised the day of small things? But* ***these seven*** *will be glad when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel-- these are the eyes of the LORD which range to and fro throughout the earth.”* Simply put it means that the Holy Spirit and the Church will look forward to the completion of God’s house. We find similar language in the book of Revelation concerning the man with the measuring line and the two witnesses. *Then there was given me a* ***measuring rod*** *like a staff; and someone said, “****Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it.*** *Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months. And I will grant authority to my* ***two witnesses****, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”* ***These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.*** (Revelation 11:1-4)

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

**Hanukkah (day 7 of 8)**

## The Feast of Dedication and The Feast of Light

**On the seventh night:**

*For the path of the righteous is as the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until full day.*

*Light is sown for the righteous, radiance for the upright.*

*O you righteous, rejoice in the Lord and acclaim His holy name.*

*The people that walked in darkness have seen a brilliant light; on those who dwelt in a land of gloom light has dawned.*

*For all the Israelites enjoyed light in their dwellings.*

*Arise, shine, for your light has dawned; the Presence of the Lord has shone upon you!*

*O House of Jacob! Come, let us walk by the light of the Lord.* **(Proverbs 4:18; Psalm 97:11-12; Isaiah 9:1; Exodus 10:23; Isaiah 60:1; 2:4)**

**Prayer on the seventh night:**

**Daily Exercise - Lectio Divina (**“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.**)**

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 seventh night:**

**The Rainbow:**

When you look at the shape of the seven-branched golden lampstand it should remind you of something else. If you continue the pattern of the lampstand with its light in an upward arc it produces a **rainbow**. Light itself contains the whole spectrum of color and when you view light through water it forms a rainbow. The six spaces between the branches represent the colors of the rainbow: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. These colors are the three primary and three secondary colors from which all other colors are made.

When viewed from earth a rainbow is a semi-circle but when viewed from the air it forms a complete circle. Often people who fly observe this phenomenon. This gives us cause to think about what happens if we turn the lampstand upside down. Another truth is revealed! Even though the lampstand is on earth with its branches pointing upwards, the truth is that it is a representation of what is in heaven.

God told Moses to make it according to the pattern in heaven. Therefore, the lampstand’s base is in heaven and the true light comes down from heaven to earth. The oil from the olive trees, which are the Law and the Prophets flow through the branch (staff), which is Jesus Christ, the Word of God. In turn it is displayed as light to the world through the branches, which are the churches. And since the base of the lampstand of which we are a part is in heaven then we should always remember that heaven is our true home and that we are just passing through giving our light to a dark world.

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

**Hanukkah (day 8 of 8)**

## The Feast of Dedication and The Feast of Light

**On the eighth night:**

*I want to close this Celebration with a Scripture passage that many Jewish people read of the eighth and last night of Hanukkah. Just as the number eight marks a new beginning in something God will do and serves as the sign for eternity this Scripture looks forward to a new heaven and a new earth in which the glory of the Lord will be its light.*

*Behold, there will come a time!*

*And the light of the moon shall become like the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall become sevenfold, like the light of the seven days, when the Lord binds up His people’s wounds and heals the injuries is it has suffered.*

*In that day, there shall be neither sunlight nor cold moonlight but there shall be a continuous day, of neither day nor night, and there shall be light at evening time.*

*No longer shall you need the sun for light by day nor the shining of the moon for radiance by night; for the Lord shall be your light everlasting, your God shall be your glory.*

*Your sun shall set no more, your moon no more withdraw; for the Lord shall be a light to you forever.*

*Cause a new light to shine upon Zion and soon may all of us be worthy to enjoy its light.* **(Isaiah 30:26; Zechariah 14:6-7; Isaiah 60:19-20)**

**Prayer on the eighth night:**

**Daily Exercise - Lectio Divina (**“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.**)**

1. Set aside enough time to complete the exercise so that you don’t have to rush through it. Usually thirty minutes is adequate.
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1. Talk with God about what he is showing you.

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**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/Review on the eighth night:**

**Forty weeks** (Forty weeks is the period of human gestation.) after His conception Jesus is born. It is Friday night, Elul 9, in the Jewish year 3756. This corresponds to our Gregorian calendar date of September 9, 5 BCE. It is the beginning of the weekly Sabbath. The Jewish people have a particular name for every Sabbath and they read specific passages of Scripture on those Sabbaths. The one on which Jesus is born is called KiTeitzei, “When you go out”. On that Sabbath night Jesus goes forth from the womb. And the next morning in the Temple and in every synagogue Isaiah 54:1-10 is read. It begins this way:

***“Shout for joy, O barren one, you who have borne no child; break forth into joyful shouting and cry aloud, you who have not travailed; for the sons of the desolate one will be more numerous than the sons of the married woman," says the LORD.***

On the following Sabbath, being the eighth day Jesus is circumcised. The Jewish people call this particular Sabbath, KiTavo, “When you enter”. On that day Jesus entered into the Mosaic Covenant through His circumcision. And in the Temple and every synagogue the prophet Isaiah 60:1-22 is read. It begins this way:

***Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth, and deep darkness the peoples; but the LORD will rise upon you, and His glory will appear upon you. And nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes round about, and see; they all gather together, they come to you.***

And in verse six of that passage of Scripture it prophesies the coming of the Magi to see Jesus. It reads this way:

*A multitude of camels will cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba will come; they will bring* ***gold*** *and* ***frankincense****, and will bear* ***good news*** (**myrrh - a sweet smelling aroma**) *of the praises of the LORD.*

Mary waited the prescribed 40 days for her purification (Read Leviticus 12:1-4) from the blood of childbirth before presenting her son, Jesus at the Temple. It was Thursday, Ethanim (Ethanim is the seventh month of God’s calendar. It falls within our September/October time frame. The Jewish people currently call this month Tishri.) 21, of the Jewish year 3756 or our October 20, 5 BCE. The Jewish people call the day Hossana Rabba or “The Great Day of Salvation”. It is the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (In Hebrew the feast is called Sukkoth, which is translated as tent, hut, tabernacle or booth and indicates a temporary dwelling.) (Sukkoth).

**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**