

Hanukkah

Ponder: God manifested

Scripture: “Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the Temple in Solomon’s porch” (John 10:22, 23, NKJV).

Today is the first day of an 8-day Jewish feast known nowadays as Hanukkah. It celebrates the rededication of the Temple by Judas Maccabeus on Chislev 25, 165 BC (usually in December by our calendar).

Exactly three years prior, Antiochus IV, a Syrian king, defiled the Temple by erecting an idol in it and sacrificing a pig on the altar. Then he proclaimed himself a god, even minting coins with his image and the inscription “Theos Epiphanes” (“god manifested”). He also prohibited the study of the Law of Moses, observance of the Sabbath, and circumcision. Disobedience resulted in unspeakably cruel punishments. Much of this vile king’s behavior was foretold in the 8th chapter of Daniel.

While Jesus was attending this feast, His enemies surrounded Him and demanded: “How long do you keep us in doubt? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly” (John 10:24). They wanted the Romans to think Jesus was inciting rebellion so He would be arrested and killed. He wisely sidestepped their challenge.

What He said in v. 30, however, startled them: “I and My Father are one.” Remember the false claim of Antiochus IV – “Theos Epiphanes” – god manifested. Now, here was Jesus making His own proclamation of His own Deity: “I and My Father are one.” His enemies knew exactly what He meant, and they “took up stones again to stone Jesus” (v. 31).

Decades later Paul wrote: “God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory” (1 Timothy 3:16). The Syrian king claimed to be a god, but he wasn’t. Jesus said, “I and My Father are one,” and it was totally true! Jesus was God in the flesh. He was justified in the Spirit when he arose from the dead. He was received up in glory as He ascended to Heaven and sat down at the Father’s right hand. We can be happy that worship was restored back in 165 BC; but even more, let us rejoice that our own relationship with God is restored through Christ, Who really is God manifested.

Song: “We will glorify the King of Kings”

Prayer: Almighty Father in heaven, we praise and thank You for sending Him who truly was and is God manifested. We thank You for always watching over Your people. Great is Your faithfulness! Help us ever to be mindful of how fortunate we are. In Jesus’ name, Amen.