



December 9, 2016

Dear Ones in Christ,

I had been considering the nature and theme of the letter I wanted to share with you all this blessed Christmas season, when I noticed that the Jewish feast of Hanukkah this year begins at sundown on Christmas Eve. Perhaps we might take a little space to notice a few points of explanation. The Jewish religious calendar differs a bit from ours, so the dates of their feasts do not conform completely with our dates. Hanukkah in the Jewish calendar falls on Kislev 25, but since the month Kislev shifts from year to year, the feast itself may occur in different parts of December (and occasionally in very late November).

The basis for Hanukkah goes back to 165 B.C. This time dates within the years between the close of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament. It is not one of the feasts of the Lord called for in Leviticus 23. At that time a wicked ruler named Antiochus Epiphanes of Syria sought to destroy the Jewish worship of Jehovah. He killed many and desecrated the Temple ordering the sacrifice of a pig on the altar. Some of the Judeans were about to comply, but Mattathias of Modin rebelled. He and his five sons (the Maccabees) finally succeeded in driving the Syrians away, but the Temple had to be cleansed. Much of the wealth of the Temple had been stolen.

The altar was destroyed and a new one built. The candlestick needed oil for the light, but only enough consecrated oil was available for one night, and the feast of the Dedication lasted for eight days. The Jewish tradition is that miraculously the oil lasted for all the time of the feast until new oil could be prepared.

The Feast of the Dedication (often called the Feast of Lights) is only mentioned once in Scripture. In John's Gospel we are told "And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch" (10:22-23). The feast is still celebrated by Jewish people today with great joy.

As recorded in Chapter 10 of the Gospel of John "Then came the Jews round about Him, and said unto Him, 'How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.' Jesus answered them, 'I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me' " (10:24-25).

That candlestick which so miraculously supplied light in the Temple points us to the One (whose birth we commemorate) who said, "I am the Light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).

At this time of the year our emphasis is on the Incarnation -- the wonderful fact that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. To each of you all -- may you have a blessed and joyous Christmas season.

Just a quick note about Solid Rock Baptist Church. Concerning the properties we mentioned in the September letter, as of now they have not worked out, so we are still "on hold" as to a place to call our church home. In the last couple of months we have had several folks who have been visiting with us and are pretty regular in the morning services. Also we are beginning to record the services on CD's to take to our shut-ins.

We thank you so much for your continued interest in the ministry of Solid Rock Baptist Church. Please continue to pray for us. Your faithfulness to us is much appreciated!

In the service of our risen and coming Lord,

*Stanley and Marvline Cline*



*Holiday Greetings*

