

County-Wide Chaplaincy

Thanks you!

21609 NE 72nd Ave Battleground, WA 98604 ~ (360) 573-7127

December 2016

Christmas and Hanukkah Greetings to You!

Each month our letter of appreciation finds its way to you from the heart of one of our chaplains. For December, Chaplain Al Walter has enjoyed researching the amazing story of Hanukkah and its relatedness to Christmas; Jesus the Messiah is the center of both holidays. As you read, may you gain insights that will encourage your hearts and deepen your celebration this Christmas season.

Sam and Janet LaPore

This year, the first day of Hanukkah coincides with Christmas Day, the last such alignment occurring in 1959. Most of us are familiar with Christmas, but do you know the significance of Hanukkah?

The word Hanukkah means dedication; it is called the Feast of Dedication which lasts eight days. The New Testament refers to this celebration in John 10:22-23: *“At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple...”*



This Jewish holy day originated with events that occurred in the Second Century B.C. Syrian King Antiochus Epiphanes banned Judaism and the Torah, forcing all Jews to worship Greek gods and embrace Greek culture. In 168 B.C. the temple was desecrated by the orders from Antiochus. All Jewish sacrifices were stopped, and the temple devoted to the pagan god Zeus. Jews were faced with this choice: either convert to the Greek gods or die.

Many Jews compromised and left the faith, but a number of faithful Jews joined a resistance movement, led by Mattathias and his five sons. Judah Maccabeus, one of the sons, was their military leader. These are the courageous few prophesied by Daniel: *“... the people, who know their God, will display strength and take action.”* (Dan. 11:32b). With small numbers and minimal weaponry, they defeated vast Syrian armies, battle after battle. They prayed to God and He gave them victory. The Jewish resistance eventually recaptured Jerusalem and rededicated the temple in 164 B.C. Thus was the birth of Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication.

According to the Talmud, the Jewish victors had only enough oil to burn the Menorah (temple candelabrum with seven candles) for one day, but the light lasted eight days. To commemorate this miracle, celebrants now use a candelabrum with eight aligned candles plus a ninth candle, normally at center in a higher position, known as the *shammash*, which means servant. The *Shammash* is used to light the other eight candles.



For those who have accepted Yeshua (Jesus) as the Messiah, the Shammash is a symbol of Yeshua who said, *"I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life"* (John 8:12). He also came as a servant, saying, *"...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many"* (Matt. 20:28). Just as the Shammash lights the other candles, so Jesus gives us light, enabling us to follow Him. Jesus told His followers, *"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven"* (Matt. 5:16).

The temple of the Old Covenant, representing the presence of God, corresponds to the physical body (individual and corporate) under the New Covenant, inhabited by the Spirit of God. *"...do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?"* (I Cor. 6:19). The dedication of the temple in 164 B.C. is a reminder for Jesus' followers to dedicate their lives to God. *"...I urge you brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship"* (Rom. 12:1).

In our household, we celebrate traditional Christmas and also celebrate Hanukkah by placing a hanukkiah (nine branched candelabrum) in the window. Let us celebrate Jesus the Messiah during this season: His birth, His presence with us, and His light in this dark world. And let us dedicate our lives to Him.

We thank God for His promise to be with us always. We thank Him for eternal life and His light that reveals truth. Thank you for your faithfulness and prayers.

Merry Christmas and Happy Hanukkah

Al Walter

As requested, you can now give online!!

Yes, we have heard the requests for the ability to give online and set up recurring billing. It's now set up and ready for use. You can find a link to give on the donations page of our website: www.911chaplain.org. Or you can go straight to it with the following link: <https://911chaplain.churchcenteronline.com/>.
