

GROWING IN GOD PODCAST



GIG173 – The Feast of Dedication 2023

Thank you for joining me in this podcast. I am wanting to talk about the Feast of Dedication, commonly known as Hanukkah. We are in this season of Hanukkah in the year 2023, and I want to address the thing that is really on my heart about the time of the Feast of Dedication in this year that we are in. We are also celebrating the 75th year of Israel being a state, and it is quite an important celebration for us to be a part of 75 years of a State of Israel. I want to tie that idea into the Feast of Dedication, and look at some of the things that are transpiring around us now in this season. It should be a joyous season. It should be a season of dedication.

When we really talk about Hanukkah, we are talking about the Jewish celebration. Let me just read a short definition of Hanukkah, or the Feast of Dedication, out of *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*. That will make it much quicker than me trying to explain it in my own words.

The festival of dedication, which is named Hanukkah in Hebrew, is the Jewish holiday which celebrates the reconsecration of the Jewish temple and its altar to the traditional service of the Lord in 165 or 164 B.C.E. It begins on the 25th day of the month Kislev (the ninth month in the lunisolar calendar; it coincides with parts of November and December) and lasts for 8 days.¹

We see that this celebration was surrounding the recapturing of the Temple Mount and the Temple during the wars that transpired in the time of the Maccabees. If you want a good history of what really transpired, you can read in First Maccabees. Chapter 4:36-59 gives quite a detailed history of exactly what was going on with the retaking of the Temple Mount, and retaking the Temple itself, and what they found when they did that. I do not think we are going to go for very long here with this, because it is a time of celebration; we should be out, you know, feasting and really rededicating ourselves to the Lord in a joyous celebration. There are other podcasts that I have done about Hanukkah, or the Feast of Dedication, which you could look up in the podcast section of the website hargraveministries.org. There you can find other podcasts where I spend more time giving the history, what happened, who the players were, all of those things. Like I said, I do not want to go into that for this podcast; I want to try to stay on point with really what the core of the Feast of Dedication was all about.

We see this definition about Hanukkah in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, and we recognize that it was, in fact, a festival of dedication. When you study aspects of Hanukkah and how it is celebrated, you will see many things. There are stories about the miracle of the oil, the relighting of the menorah in the Temple; but it was about the recleansing. When they took over the Temple, it had been devastated by those who captured Jerusalem. On the altar there were un-kosher sacrifices that had been made. Everything was basically polluted, and it was brought to a place where it was no longer holy and it was no longer sanctified for the worship of God. They had to deal with that; and so, what we really see as the impetus of the Feast of Dedication is the fact that they rebuilt the altar. They had to remove all the stones from the old altar. They rebuilt the menorah. They rebuilt most of the implements of the holy

¹ VanderKam, James C. "Dedication, Feast of." Ed. David Noel Freedman. *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* 1992: vol 2, p 123. Print.

service that was to take place in the Temple. All of these things were recreated, and then they had to be rededicated so that they were fit for use in the service of worship that was the Temple form of worship. This is where we get the idea of rededication, which really is what Hanukkah is known for.

Where I want to take this and the burden of my heart is to see, number one, that this is something that Christ was a part of, the celebration of the rededication of the Temple. And so, this is an activity, it is an event, it is a time that I believe Christians should be involved in. We will look at John the tenth chapter, starting at verses 22-24. It says,

At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly."

Here we see that Christ had come to Jerusalem for this Feast of Dedication, and He was in the Temple where the Feast of Dedication was taking place. He was being asked the question, "Are You the Christ?" We recognize that He was appearing to them; but He was there lending His support, and we recognize this in the Gospel of John, to the validity for Christian believers of this Feast of Dedication. So it is something for the Jewish people, a very deep celebration; and it is something for the Christian believer, again, a deep celebration.

What is it that we are celebrating? We are celebrating this idea of dedication, or rededicating our lives to God and to our service to God, being fit for the Master's use. My burden for this is, because we are in the time of the 75th anniversary of Israel, and I believe we are in a very unique time in history globally, that we are seeing something interesting happening – that after the passage of a great amount of time, you lose the significance of that which is sacred, that which is holy. I think we are seeing that. It is a deep concern that I have for some of the things that are going on in Israel, some of the things that I have heard people say. I mean, really egregious comments about not wanting to defend the country, or serve in the military; "rather see another Holocaust"; "rather die." We are looking at the fact that after 75 years, many have lost the reason, why is there an Israel? why was the nation formed? what is the purpose of it?

If you go back those 75 years, there was a great clarity of why Israel was formed. It was recognized by many, including governments of the world like England, that without an Israel, without a Jewish state, the Jewish people would not survive because they were under such attack. They had just come out of the days of the Holocaust, and statements like, "I'd rather see another Holocaust than fight" – that is ludicrous. It only goes to show how far the mind goes in forgetting the lessons of history that had been learned by previous generations. Israel was built on the dedication of its people that came in. It first started with the kibbutzim, where people literally lived hand to mouth, and nobody drew a salary. Everybody lived almost a communist type of lifestyle, as far as no one owned anything; everything was a matter of the community. Everybody worked for the community. Nobody had something of his or her own, but there was only one focus: that was to build the state, to build this Jewish state, where the Jewish people could survive because of the obvious determination through history to see the destruction of the Jewish people.

And so here we are, celebrating the Feast of Dedication. Why? Because, again, Jerusalem and the Temple had been destroyed, and had been overrun and overtaken. Thank God for the strength of the Maccabees to rally the people to come and fight once again to save their lives, to reestablish the city of Jerusalem under their control – to re-establish the possession of the Temple, to begin to rededicate it,

to rebuild it, so that the Temple worship could once again begin, and their life before God and their life within their community would be restored. And when you look around what is going on in Israel right now, you realize there is a lot of division, there is a lot of almost losing their way. Why an Israel? Why a state? Because something has to exist as a Jewish state. Number one, it is the promise of God; it is the covenant of God that He would give them the land of Israel. But also, if you do not realize, in the world today, without a Jewish state which houses and protects the Jewish people, their very lives, once again, are threatened. In history, they are surrounded by their enemies; and what is transpiring now within Israel itself, especially among its young people, is a loss of this recognition and the lessons of history that show there must be a strong, united, State of Israel.

And so, I think as we come to this Feast of Dedication in this year 2023, my prayers are for Israel and her people. The prophecies about the restoration of Israel are that they would be one people, that they would be one mind, that they would have one language; they would have one currency, they would have one faith – so there is a coming together that is to happen in the prophecies. There is not just to be the existence of a State of Israel; there is to be this great drawing together of the people into one heart and one people. God said He would give them a new spirit, and that He would dwell in their midst; and this must transpire.

What we see now is almost as a result of forgetting the lessons of history. I know it is not just in Israel. A lot of what we have gone through in America over the last several years, where we are tearing down the history – tearing down those who were fathers of the nation, and what they did and who they were and what they lived for, and what America lived for, and why it was formed in the first place – and we go into a woke mentality that wants to throw all of these things overboard. I feel like we are living in an Alzheimer's state, where people have forgotten – forgotten why things are the way they are, how they became what they are. America is a great country. It has been a land of freedom for many peoples of many nations, and it has built an economy that has been a blessing to the world. And we see that in 75 years, Israel is following in those footsteps. It is a great nation. It has a tremendous economy. It has tremendous technology that is blessing the world. It is not something that should be taken lightly, or thrown out for some reason. Whatever the problems are, they need to be solved.

This is what happened in this time of dedication, when they finally were able to take the city back. It was in ruins, it was in shambles. There were a lot of problems, there were a lot of needs. They had to get in and they had to recreate the holy things, the sacred things. They had to rededicate the sacred things, rebuild the holy place, rebuild the worship and the relationship to God that had been destroyed by those who had overtaken the land. And I feel like this attitude needs to be in our hearts as we come to this time of Hanukkah in this year. We need to see this be a feast of rededication. We need to rededicate, number one, our own hearts to God. We need to rebuild the sacred things within our own hearts and spirits. We need to regenerate the love in our hearts for one another, and for the Word of God and the prophecies that exist over this state, over this nation, and over this people of Israel. We need to see a lot of drive that is set to re-establish the sacred relationships surrounding the sacred things.

One thing that has always tied America and Israel together is the Judeo-Christian values that have been at the core of our culture, have been at the core of our laws, have been at the core of our Constitution, have been at the core of the way that we have related to others and to nations that surround us. And these same values, these sacred values that are built up around the worship of God, the Word of God, the love of God and the love of our fellow man, these are the foundations upon which Israel was built.

We need to celebrate in this Hanukkah, this Feast of Dedication, a new age in which we come together and celebrate not only the 75th anniversary of Israel, but also set a course for the next 75 years of her history, that is going to re-educate the younger generations into why there is a State of Israel – why it is necessary, not only for the Jewish people, but I believe for the nations of the world. Those lessons of history must be retaught. It is one of the cores of the Shema prayer, as you go on reading, that you teach your children. You teach them while you are on the way, while you are in your home. There needs to be a re-education of the youth of Israel, of the youth of America, and the youth of all nations, into the Judeo-Christian values that have been the core that have established these great nations before God. And we need to rebuild the sacred worship, the sacred trust, and the sacred reading and believing in the Scriptures that have been given to us.

And so, as we approach this time of Hanukkah, as we immerse ourselves into this great celebration, we have eight days in which we can not just celebrate with joy and light candles; but let's see the restoration of the light that Israel is to be to the world – starting with itself. We bless Israel during these days of Hanukkah. We as believers in Christ enter in, just as Christ entered in and came to the Temple. We, too, rally at this time around Israel, around all that she needs, all that she is to be; and we come and add our strength, our faith, our finances, and all that we can be, to be a blessing to Israel, to the Jewish people, during these days of Hanukkah and this great Feast of Dedication.

I bless us during this time. Lord, we just ask that Your Presence fill the nation of Israel at this time. We loose in our hearts, by faith, the fulfillment of the prophecies, the ancient prophecies, that there be a new heart, that there be a new spirit, that there be one language, that there be one people; that there be one tongue, that there be one worship in their hearts. We bless Your land. We bless the promises that You have given, to see their fulfillment during these great days of the Feast of Dedication, the Feast of Hanukkah.

Amen.