

DECEMBER

HANUKKAH AND CHRISTMAS

Hanukkah is an eight-day Jewish holiday that is celebrated in December. December 25th is the day that the birth of Messiah Jesus in Bethlehem is remembered in fulfillment of prophecy that is recorded in the Jewish Holy Scriptures. Hanukkah is the remembrance of the moving of the Almighty God of Israel to deliver our Jewish people from bondage in 165 B.C. Then the God of Israel sent the Messiah the first time to earth to deliver both Jews and Gentiles from the bondage of sin by His providing the blood of atonement for our sins in 32-33 A.D.

During Hanukkah we remember the victory of the Jewish Maccabees over the armies of a nation that had polluted the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem and would destroy our Jewish people. God gave victory to the greatly outnumbered Maccabees to the place where they recaptured Jerusalem and the Temple site. The Jewish people then cleansed the Temple and restored the worship of the God of Israel. The Day of Atonement and daily sacrifices for the cleaning of sin were again carried on. The eight day celebration today is a time of great joy with family gatherings and the exchange of gifts, for this was a great victory for the children of Israel. Hanukkah also has special meaning for all Bible-believers who cherish the Word of God, for with this victory God also preserved the Jewish Bible (Old Testament) for us so that we have it today. Through the 39 books of the Jewish Bible we have the true story of creation; the call of God to Abraham and the history of our Jewish people; the many miracles God performed on behalf of the descendants of Abraham; God's revealing himself to the world and giving the knowledge of Heaven and Hell; and the many prophecies of the coming of the Messiah to earth two times. The first coming of Messiah would provide the blood of atonement for personal peace to all who believed. The second coming of Messiah is yet future and will bring peace to Israel and the world.

The God of Israel foretold, through His Jewish prophets, the coming of Messiah to earth to provide for us the blood of atonement for us to be forgiven of our sins. This is the truth that God would have us know regarding the day called Christmas. It is the celebration of the coming to earth of the Messiah in fulfillment of Jewish Bible prophecy. What are these prophecies?

About 742 B.C. the Jewish man of God and prophet, Isaiah, wrote in his book Isaiah, chapter 7, verse 14: ***“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”*** Immanuel in Hebrew means “God with us.” The Hebrew for ***“virgin”*** in this verse is “almah.” When the 70 Jewish scholars translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek around 285 B.C., they translated “almah” with “Parthenos” which is the definite Greek word for ***“virgin.”*** The late Dr. David Cooper, a scholar in Hebrew, wrote that the Hebrew word for ***“virgin”*** is “almah.” The word is used only seven times in the Hebrew Bible, and in the context it always means a ***“virgin.”*** The prophecy says that a ***“virgin”*** shall conceive and bear a son, and this son shall be called ***“Immanuel”*** which in Hebrew is

“God with us.” This is a definite prophecy of the Messiah coming to earth to take on human form to die to provide the blood of atonement for us to be forgiven of our sins.

We read in the Jewish Bible additional prophecies that confirm the coming to earth of the Messiah who is of the Godhead. About 740 B.C. Isaiah recorded God’s Word for us in Isaiah, chapter 9, verses 6-7: **“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”** The two comings of the Messiah to earth are in these verses. First, he is born as a son into the world; this is His first coming to bring us the atonement for our sins. After Messiah Jesus dies for our sins, He is resurrected and ascends to the right hand of God in Heaven (Psalm 110, verse 1). Messiah’s second coming to earth is yet before us when He will bring peace to Israel and the world (Zechariah, chapter 14 and other Holy Scriptures.) In Isaiah, chapter 9, verses 6-7 notice that this one who is born into the world will be called by the names of God, for His life here will show that He is of the Godhead as other verses of the Bible clearly state. Our quotation of Isaiah 9, verse 6 is a direct translation from the Hebrew; the Messiah is also God.

Around 712 B.C. Isaiah also recorded for us the words of the Almighty God of Israel in Isaiah, chapter 48, verses 16-17: **“Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me...”** The speaker in this prophecy says that He has not spoken in secret; He has revealed Himself being God. If you read this entire chapter 48, you will see clearly that the speaker here is God. Now look what happens! Verse 16 continues: **“and now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me.”** The speaker, who is God, is sent by the Lord God and His Spirit. The Lord God, and His Spirit, sent God. We see in this verse in the Jewish Bible that God shows Himself to us in more than one person. Verse 17 adds to this truth when it tells us: **“Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.”** Verse 17 states that the speaker of verse 16 is the LORD God of Israel!

Micah, another Jewish man of God and prophet in Israel, about 710 B.C. recorded these words in Micah chapter 5, verse 2 (verse 1 in some translations): **“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”** God foretold that He would send one to earth who would be born in the town of **“Bethlehem.”** This One would be from **“everlasting.”** Only a member of the Godhead is from **“everlasting.”** An eternal one who is of the Godhead would be sent to earth by virgin birth (yes, God can easily

perform a miracle) to be born in **“Bethlehem”** to have a human body to provide the atonement for us to be forgiven of our sins.

In chapter 53 of the prophecy of Isaiah that was written about 700 B.C., we have a complete picture of the Messiah in His birth, life, and death to bear our sins, and His resurrection to new life. A careful reading of this chapter reveals to us that this One sent from God will provide the atonement for the sins of all who would trust in Him. We read in this chapter: **“He was cut off out of the land of the living...It pleased the LORD to bruise him...when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin...he shall prolong his days...by knowing him (or trusting in him) shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities...he bear the sin of many...”**

These prophecies and others make known to us that the God of Israel would send the Messiah to provide the way for us to be cleansed of all sin. The Jewish man of God, John, wrote in John, chapter 1, verses 1-2, 14 and 19: **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God...And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth...The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”**

In John, chapter 3, verse 16 we read: **“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”** Yes, Jesus is our Jewish Messiah and Redeemer. To trust in Messiah Jesus for our atonement is the will of the God of Israel for us today. Nothing can compare to having God’s forgiveness for all our sins and to know we are going to Heaven when we die. The God of Israel has promised this to all people who will trust Him and His plan of redemption in Messiah Jesus. Those of us who are blood descendants of Abraham are still very much Jews in believing in the God of Israel’s Messiah Jesus. I was born a Jew and will die a Jew, for this is the will of the Almighty God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in whom I trust. To Him be all the praise!