

Audio Teaching Sermon Message #60 Festival of Hanukkah

[A Intro – Pastor Jefferson 0:00 thru 1:00]

Hey folks. It is my fervent prayer that the information you are hearing in these audio sermons, is being used by Jesus to change your life—no doubt it will be for the better. Our Biblical education is important—no, it’s actually critical to getting us to the point of reaching full salvation. Welcome to the next installment of **DWJD’s audio teaching sermon series**. We are now up to audio sermon #60—and it is entitled “*The Festival of Hanukkah*.” I’m Pastor Jefferson and in the last lesson, we discussed the role that God’s 2 witnesses are going to play in the **1st half** of the **Tribulation**. Today, we are going to continue that discussion by tying the timing of their appearance to the Jewish holiday of **Hanukkah**. We are also going to show how Jesus’ ministry was tied to it as well.

[B Attempt to Hellenize Israel 1:00 thru 2:23]

Perhaps the best way to proceed is to begin by defining exactly what **Hanukkah** is. **Hanukkah** is the **Jewish** celebration known as the “**Festival of Lights**,” which ‘**commemorates the rededication of the 2nd Temple in Jerusalem following the Maccabean revolt.**’ In **168 BC**, a king by the name of **Antiochus IV Epiphanes** of Syria tried to *Hellenize* the Jewish people. **Hellenization** is defined as ‘**the spread and forcible adoption of ancient Greek culture, language, religion and ideas over to non-Greek peoples.**’ He did so by outlawing the practice of **Judaism**, including prohibiting the reading of the **Torah**, as well as forbidding the ritual observation of the **Sabbath**. He desecrated their Temple by installing an idol—a **statue and altar to Zeus**—inside the Holy of Holies. He also sacrificed non-kosher animals on Temple grounds. These actions are all prophetic forerunners of what the **Antichrist** will do to the Jewish nation, the Hebrew people, and their rebuilt Temple during the **Tribulation**.

[C Rededicating the Temple 2:23 thru 4:15]

A small band of Jewish fighters, led by a man named **Judah Maccabee** (*aka the hammer*) led a successful guerilla war against the larger Syrian-Greek army. In **164 BC**, the Maccabee’s successfully recaptured Jerusalem. They immediately set out to purify their defiled Temple. They removed the pagan idols, dismantled the desecrated altar, and in its place built a new one. And on the **17th** of **Kislev**, they began a formal rededication ceremony. The word **Hanukkah** in Hebrew literally means ‘**dedication.**’ As we already

know, **Hanukkah** is not the Jewish version of **Christmas**. It is tied entirely to the recapture and subsequent rededication of their **2nd temple**, which was originally constructed back in **526 BC**. In order for the Hebrew Temple to be properly restored, a special ceremonial candelabra needed to burn uninterrupted for **8 consecutive days** to complete the ritual of dedication. This event took place in **164 BC** when the candelabra burned continually for **8 days** on just one day's worth of oil. The 8th day was completed on the **25th** of the Hebrew month of **Kislev**, which corresponds to our modern date of **December 3rd** in **164 BC**. The event of Hanukkah is thus commemorated every year. So, we just determined that the festival of **Hanukkah** was established 164 years *prior* to the birth of Jesus.

[**D** **Jesus is the Good Shepherd** **4:15 thru 5:31**]

There is only a single mention of **Hanukkah** found in the **NT**. We read it in **John 10:22**, where it says, ¹ *"Then the Festival of Dedication [Hanukkah] took place ² in Jerusalem, ³ and it was winter."* To set the stage, Jesus was in Jerusalem at the time, and was preaching regarding Him being the fulfilment of Messiah, stating that it was He who was the **good shepherd**. In the chapter, Jesus equates Himself to being the good shepherd and the sheep as being His true followers. I recommend you take a few minutes now and read **John** chapter **10** for yourself. When you do, notice that Jesus is saying that He alone is able to willingly lay down His life, and do it entirely of His own accord, with no one having the ability to take it from Him. He goes on to state that this is true because of the command He received from God, His heavenly Father. His preaching created a strong ideological division between the Jews listening to Him speak.

[**E** **Can a Demon Cure Blindness?** **5:31 thru 6:42**]

The Bible says that many of them present attacked Jesus by saying, *"He has a demon and He's crazy. Why do you listen to Him?"* While others were defending Him by arguing, *"These aren't the words of someone demon possessed. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"* Isn't the exact same thing happening today? Those who hate the cause of Christ will attack anyone promoting the name of Jesus by using false rhetoric and lies; while those who love Christ respond to those baseless accusations by using solid, verifiable facts. Funny how few people's minds are changed on either side in these kinds of debates. This is where **John, Chapter 10** and **verse 22** mentions that **Jesus** was present at the festival of **Hanukkah**. **T-3** tells us it was *winter*. The Greek word we find for **winter** is [2] *khay-MONE*, which means by implication **'a storm, tempest or the rainy season.'**

[**F** The Stormy Season 6:42 thru 8:14]

In the year of **32 AD**, the final year of the ministry of Jesus, the festival of **Hanukkah** began on the **8th of December**, with Hanukkah occurring on the **16th**. The definition of winter has two separate descriptions. **Calendar** or **meteorological winter** begins **‘on December 1st and lasts through the last day of February,’** reflecting the coldest 3 months of the year. And **astronomical winter** begins on **‘the 21st of December.’** Jesus was in Jerusalem on the **16th** of December, which is still close enough to be called **“Winter”** in either case. But Jesus was also telling us that it was the stormy or tempest time of the year, marking the final season of His ministry had begun. While Jerusalem can occasionally get snow during the winter, it is a rare event, only happening once or twice per decade. Remember, *nothing* God states in Scripture appears by accident. His timing is always divinely and prophetically driven. Keep that in mind as you digest this sermon. What Jesus is telling us here is that this same riotous debate He just mentions in John, will also be occurring prior to the start of the Antichrist’s **Unholy Week**.

[**G** From Hanukkah Until the Return of Christ 8:14 thru 9:40]

God’s 2 witnesses will appear on the Temple Mount on the day of **Hanukkah** in **2033**. This day falls on the **24th of December** of that year. They will begin their time of preaching for precisely **1,260 days**—the same length of time that Jesus held His ministry. The witnesses will be murdered by the **Beast** coming out of the pit on the **5th of June 2037**. Take a look at the **1st chart** in the *Prophecy Interval* section, **part E** in the *Sermon Summary PDF*. Exactly **1,260 days** later, on the **17th of November 2040**, Jesus will return for the event called, **“The Second Coming.”** This will be the day the **Battle of Armageddon** takes place—the shortest and most violent war in human history. So, from **Hanukkah** of **2033** until Christ returns, is exactly **2,520 days**. [1,260 + 1,260] Take another look at the PDF I just mentioned. Coincidence? I can tell you that I know without a doubt that it most certainly is not. It works out to be **84 months**—exactly as the Bible predicts.

[**H** Are You Sent from God? 9:40 thru 11:20]

John in the **10th** chapter and **23rd verse** goes on to tell us that, **“Jesus was walking in the temple complex in Solomon’s Colonnade.”** This is the exact same spot where God’s 2 witnesses will walk and preach. And it will also be where the Antichrist feet will tread in the newly rebuilt **3rd Temple**. Look now at **verse 24**. It reads, **“Then the Jews surrounded Him (speaking of Jesus) and asked, ‘How long are You going to keep us in suspense? If**

you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.’ ” The Jews in Jerusalem will ask the very same question of the 2 witnesses when they appear on the Temple Mount. It is my humble opinion that this is the reason God will be sending 2 witnesses. God promised only 1 Messiah and not 2. And they will also inquire thusly of the man who will be the Antichrist. He too will be asked the same question following the murder of God’s witnesses. The majority of the dire threats and plots to kill Jesus all came within the final few months of His ministry. It will be the same with God’s 2 witnesses. But Satan will be powerless to touch them until God ordains it; just as it was with Jesus Himself. God alone determines the date of their deaths, and no man will be able to take it from them apart from Almighty God’s allowance.

[**I** Who was Herod Antipas? 11:20 thru 12:56]

Let’s now spin back around to **John the Baptist** and **Jesus**. As was shown in the last audio sermon, **John the Baptist** began preaching and baptizing in the Jordan River on **19 June 26**. If we add **1,260** days to that date, we arrive on **30 November 29**. This was the very day that John was murdered by **King Herod Antipas**. **Antipas**, as he was known, **‘was King Herod I’s eldest son.’** **Herod I**, Antipas’ father, is the same King who ordered all the babies killed in and around Bethlehem. John had been rendering judgment upon Antipas and rebuking him publicly on a regular basis for divorcing his wife and marrying his niece **Herodias**. Herodias used to be his brother Philip’s wife. **Philip** was still living and so Philip and Antipas were both *uncles* to Herodias. Thus, Antipas’ marriage to Herodias was in direct violation of God’s law against both incest and adultery. Now Antipas knew that John was a righteous man, and was intrigued by his preaching. Antipas enjoyed hearing John speak. Despite John’s ongoing rebuke, Antipas still chose to leave him alone.

[**J** A Promise Made, A Promise Kept 12:56 thru 14:24]

However, **Herodias** seethed with anger toward **John the Baptist** because he dared to speak out against the king. And, to appease his wife, Herod finally had John thrown into prison. As a powerful Roman ruler, Herod could have had **John the Baptist** executed at any time, but he respected John as a righteous man who spoke the truth and elected not have him put to death. In contrast, Herodias loathed John and wanted him dead. Seizing an opportunity at Herod’s birthday party, Herodias set about her plan to have John the Baptist murdered. At the banquet, Herodias’s daughter, whom tradition names **Salome**, performed a very provocative dance designed to arouse her male audience using lust as

the age-old bait. Herodias's daughter's performance greatly pleased the king and his guests. **Mark 6:22-23** tells us the result was the now drunken Herod told the girl, *"Ask me for anything you like and I will give it to you . . . up to half my kingdom!"* With these words, King Herod flaunted his generosity and greatness before his guests, but soon he would deeply regret this vow.

[**K** **Be Careful of What you Ask For** **14:24 thru 15:56**]

Herodias's daughter went and asked her mother, in **verse 24**, *"What should I ask for?"* Queen Herodias' reply was predictable when she said, *"Ask for the head of John the Baptist!"* Not skipping a beat, the girl hurried back to Herod and said in **verse 25**, *"I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter."* Evidently, her cruelty and submission to evil mirrored her mother's. Unable to take back his hastily uttered oath, the king had no choice but to grant the girl's wish. He dispatched his executioner to the prison where John the Baptist was murdered via beheading. This is another prophecy of those persons who refuse to accept the mark of the Antichrist, during the last half of the tribulation. The soldier returned to the banquet with John's head on a platter and presented it to the girl, who, in turn, gave it to her mother. Scriptural history now tells us Herod Antipas's birthday was on **Nov 30th**. So, this aligns with the chart we just discussed showing the day when John the Baptist was murdered, exactly 1,260 days following the start of his ministry. To prove that it was actually Antipas' birthday when John was murdered, we must now more closely examine the timing of Antipas' life.

[**L** **Antipas Knew Who Jesus Was** **15:56 thru 17:27**]

History records that **Herod Antipas** was born in **21 BC** and died at some point following his expulsion and exile by the Roman emperor Caligula in **39 AD**. If our date of John being killed on **30 Nov 29** is accurate, this would mean **Antipas** was born on **30 Nov** in **21 BC**. This timing tells us that Antipas would have been an adult at the time of the birth of Christ and would have been fully aware of the impact of his father ordering the killing of all the first born in and around Bethlehem in **2 AD**. This also tells us that Antipas would have been **52 years old** when Jesus was brought before him prior to His crucifixion. We read in the account of **Luke** chapter **23** that Antipas was greatly pleased to see Jesus. The Bible tells us that he had wanted to see Him for a long time because Antipas had evidently heard a lot about him. This is consistent with him enjoying listening to the preaching of

John the Baptist. **Luke** also tells us in **verse 8** that he wanted to see Jesus perform a miracle. **Luke** further states that Antipas questioned Jesus at great length, but that Jesus refused to answer any of his questions, preferring to remain silent.

[**M** **John Prophesied 1,260 Days** **17:27 thru 18:49**]

Interestingly, two of the Gospels mention Antipas' **birthday feast** but don't specify a date. **Matthew** in his **14th** chapter, **6th** verse says, *"On Herod's birthday, however, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod so much that he promised with an oath to give to her whatever she asked."* **Mark 6:21** reads; *"On Herod's birthday, her opportunity arose. Herod held a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee."* So, there can be no doubt that the murder of John took place on Herod's birthday. Using Malichi's prophecy, we know that John's ministry was prophesied to last **1,260** days. The near or close part pertained to John, with the far portion pertaining to Elijah. Modern scholars frequently estimate that John's ministry was short lived—perhaps **6 months to a year**. However, this is completely in error, as there is not one iota of Scripture to support this. On the contrary, John's ministry was perfectly aligned with Elijah, both in content and duration. Once again, God does nothing by halves.

[**Z** **Some Final Thoughts** **18:49 thru 20:21**]

The point of this particular sermon has been to show that the day of **Hanukkah**, when Jesus entered the Temple Mount (Solomon's Colonnade), served as the launching point leading to His eventual death and resurrection. In the same manner, God's 2 witnesses will also appear on the **Temple Mount** on the day of **Hannukah**, near the start of the Tribulation. This too will serve as their launching point on their ministry. I find it fascinating that the duration of the ministries of **Jesus, John the Baptist, God's two witnesses** as well as the man who will be the **Antichrist**, all share this exact interval of 1,260 days. As you've heard me ask many times: Is this all just a coincidence? For those who fail to see God's symmetry within the pages of both history and Scripture, I strongly recommend you go back and start over. You are failing to surrender to the teaching of Jesus and guidance of the Holy Spirit. These facts from out of God's word are the proof that He uses to surge our faith and hence advance our relationship with Jesus. We will of course pick up this discussion in the next audio sermon. **So, until next time my beloved, this has been Pastor Jefferson, speaking in God's Holy name and for His glory alone. Amen!**