



As we prepare for Christmas, people think about different things; even Christians think differently. I know that we all, at some point, think about Jesus being born in an animal shelter and laid in a manger. We think of Christmas trees and lights, because that imagery is inescapable. I love Christmas decorations. When we get down to thinking about more specific things, this is where we might vary a little. We each have our family traditions that we do every year. I get excited for these traditions. We have a few that I look forward to every year.

[Author note: Share some of your family traditions. Here is an example of what I shared so you can get a feel for it. You can change these examples out for your family's traditions.]

We celebrate Christmas all month long. Our church has its Christmas program the first week in December, which is usually the first part of our family Christmas traditions. We watch a lot of the same Christmas movies and listen to the same Christmas music every year. We go to Bronner's in Frankenmuth at some point to get ornaments for the boys and get their picture taken with Santa. We get our kids new pajamas to wear the night before we open our presents as a family. We read the Christmas story each year before we start opening gifts. Then, of course, we give each other gifts and do family Christmas parties and gift exchanges with both families. We don't do anything outrageous, but we celebrate all month long. Our December is dominated by Christmas, as I'm sure is the case for many of you.

Did you know that Jesus and His family had December traditions, too? They didn't celebrate Christmas, of course, but they did celebrate. The Bible tells us that Jesus celebrated the Feast of Dedication, or as we call it, Chanukah.

*John 10:22-23 (ESV)*

*At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon.*

Jesus, like Jews before Him (and even to this day), celebrated Chanukah every winter. I want to take a few minutes to explain Chanukah to you, because I think it pertains not only to the Christmas season but to the Christian life. Now, some Christians go back-and-forth over whether the events that inspired the holiday happened or not, because the events are not written about in the Old or the New Testament. There's a reason for that. The events took place during the period of silence between the two testaments. Here's why I believe they did happen.

First, the Bible doesn't contain every miracle God has performed. I know this, because we have had miracles happen in our lifetime, and because John said that all the books in the world couldn't contain all the miracles Jesus did just while He was on Earth (Jon 21:25). God's always been powerful, and He's always been working.

The second reason I believe the events took place is because Jesus celebrated the holiday. Jesus honored and celebrated Chanukah, and by doing so, He celebrated and honored the events that led to Chanukah.

What is Chanukah all about, and why am I talking about it at Christmas? Chanukah commemorates the purification and rededication of the second temple in Israel during the second century B.C. Antioch IV Epiphanes, ruler of Syria at that time, outlawed Jewish worship. He wanted to force the people of Israel to worship false Greek gods. To emphasize his point, he defiled the temple in 168 B.C. by putting up an alter to Zeus and sacrificing pigs in the temple. Worst of all, he killed thousands of Jewish people in Jerusalem.

There was a Jewish priest named Mattathias Cohen who wasn't going to take this lying down. With his sons, he led a Jewish revolt. Two years into the revolt, Mattathias died, and his son Judas took over. He was affectionately known as Judas Maccabee, which means Judas the Hammer, or the Hebrew Hammer. The Jews were successful in driving the Syrians out of Jerusalem and reclaiming Israel. When they had, Judas ordered the people to cleanse the temple of God, restore the alter, and relight the lamp of God, or the menorah. The lamp of God was supposed to be lit continuously, but there was only enough sacred oil to keep the lamp lit for one night. By a miracle of God, the sacred, uncontaminated oil lasted eight days, keeping the menorah lit while they were able to get more oil for the temple. Chanukah celebrates this miracle.

This preview includes a select number of pages from this resource.

If you like what you see, download the entire resource today!

**[downloadyouthministry.com](http://downloadyouthministry.com)**