

Hanukkah¹
Selected Scripture
ABC 12/12/21

Picture this: The wind blew & snow swirled around the house. Candles flickered in the window. Mom was in the kitchen preparing the traditional dinner. A spirit of excitement fills the air as little ones eagerly anticipate their gifts. After dinner, Dad gathers the family to retell the old, old, story. The family listens as he explains the meaning of this night & the story behind it. I know what you're thinking, *Christmas is a wonderful & miraculous story!* But I didn't say anything about Christmas. This story isn't the Christmas story but the Hanukkah story. While we're in the season of Advent, Hanukkah is being celebrated, concluding tomorrow night. Most of us probably don't know too much about it. I've heard it referred to as the Jewish Christmas which is not correct. But I ran across a fictitious story this week. It goes like this...

Continuing the current trend of large-scale mergers & acquisitions, it was announced today at a press conference that Christmas & Hanukkah will merge. An industry source said the deal had been in the works for hundreds of years. While details weren't available, it's believed the overhead cost of having 12 days of Christmas & 8 days of Hanukkah was becoming prohibitive for both sides. By combining forces, we're told, the world will be able to enjoy consistent high-quality service during the 15 Days of Chrismukah, as the new holiday is being called.

Massive layoffs are expected, with lords a-leaping & maids a-milking being the hardest hit. As part of the conditions of the agreement, the letters on the dreidel, currently in Hebrew, will be replaced by Latin, thus becoming unintelligible to a wider audience. Also, instead of translating to "A great miracle happened there," the message on the dreidel will be the more generic, "Miraculous stuff happens." In exchange, it's believed that Jews will be allowed to use Santa Claus & his merchandising resources for buying & delivering their gifts.

One of the sticking points holding up the agreement for at least 300 years was the question of whether Jewish children could leave milk & cookies for Santa even after having eaten meat for dinner. A breakthrough came when Oreos were declared to be Kosher. All sides appeared happy about this.

A spokesman for Christmas, Inc., declined to say whether a takeover of Kwanzaa might not be in the works as well. He merely pointed out that, were it not for the independent existence of Kwanzaa, the merger between Christmas & Chanukah might be seen as an unfair cornering of the holiday market. Fortunately, for all concerned, he said, Kwanzaa will help maintain the competitive balance. He then closed the press conference by leading all present in a rousing rendition of "Oy Vey, All Ye Faithful."²

¹Parts adapted from:

Israel My Glory, Dec/Jan 1986-87, pp 2-5, *Why Do We Celebrate Christmas On Dec 25?* Marv Rosenthal

Dec/Jan 1989-90, pp 4-6, *The Light Shines Brighter Still*, Elwood McQuaid

Dec/Jan 1990-91, pp 22-23, *Joel of Jerusalem*, Zvi

Jewish Literacy, Joseph Telushkin, pp 575-76

The Lederer Letter, Nov/Dec 1995, *Hanukkah, The Feast of Dedication*, pp 1-2, excerpted from *God's Appointed Times*, by Barney Kasdan

The Outpouring, Elwood McQuaid, 1990 pp 111-122

Zion's Fire, Nov/Dec 1995, *Hanukkah: The Feast of Dedication*, Kevin L. Howard, pp 4-10

² David E Owen, *Keeping Christ in Hanukkah*, http://sermons.pastorlife.com/members/sermon.asp?SERMON_ID=2950&fm=authorbio&authorid=3332

While all that's made up, we do have Jesus, whose birth we celebrate at Christmas, celebrating Hanukkah in Jn 10. What we find there is a merging of these as the Christ of Christmas comes to the Temple to celebrate Hanukkah. Hanukkah is a Jewish holiday that wasn't given by God in the OT but was one Jesus celebrated while on the earth. Hanukkah started during the 400 years between the Old & NTs, the so-called silent years between Malachi & Matthew. While Hanukkah isn't a biblical holiday, events associated with it are found in both the Old & NTs. Antiochus & Mattathias & his sons are referred to in the prophetic writings of Dan 11. We read:

Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, & do away with the regular sacrifice. & they will set up the abomination of desolation. By smooth *words* he will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant, but the people who know their God will display strength & take action (:31-32).

Jesus celebrated Hanukkah at the Temple shortly before His death. [Jn 10:22](#)

The events that led to the beginning of Hanukkah were an attempt to force the Jewish people away from the worship of the true & living God & to assimilate into Greek culture. But a godly remnant within Israel wouldn't give in. Had Israel been successfully assimilated into Hellenism, Jesus couldn't have been born a son of Abraham, of the tribe of Judas, of the family of David, & all men would still be dying in their sins. Every Christian should at least have some understanding of Hanukkah. It's far more than burning a 9-branched candelabra in the window for 8 days. It's closely related to the ultimate revelation of the glory of God {& maybe even the date chosen for the observance of Christmas.}

1. Hanukkah's Origin With the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC, his kingdom was divided among 4 of his generals. 1 of them controlled Syria to the north of Israel & another over the Egyptian empire to the south of Israel. For about 100 years Israel was under the dominion of Egypt, but eventually fell under the control of Syria. A state of war broke out between Syria & Egypt with Israel trapped between. At times she didn't know to which empire she belonged. In the 2nd century BC a Syrian, Antiochus IV, came to power over Israel. He outlawed Jewish circumcision, observing the Sabbath, & keeping the Mosaic Law. He wanted to assimilate the Jewish people fully into Greek culture & destroy Judaism. He'd launched a successful military campaign against Egypt & in 168 BC he returned a 2nd time. He wanted to consolidate his earlier victory & bring Egypt under Syrian

domination. But he was met with a message from the Roman senate who, for political reasons, opposed his conquest of Egypt. The choice he was offered was clear: Either break off his attack or face war with Rome. Upset by this he started for home. On the way he stopped in Jerusalem. Here was a chance to vent his frustrations & deal with the Jews who wouldn't forsake their God. He had his troops enter the Temple & remove the sacred objects. He pillaged the temple treasury & the Temple was turned into a pagan shrine & dedicated to the Greek god, Zeus. Above the altar an image of Zeus was hung. Some accounts say the features on the image were those of Antiochus himself. In a deliberate act of defiance & self-exaltation, Antiochus forced himself upon the Jews as *Epiphanes*, meaning the *manifest* or *visible* god. But was nick-named by his enemies as *Epimanes*, meaning *madman*. On the 25th of the Jewish month Kislev the **abomination of desolation** that Daniel referred to (11:31) happened. A pig was sacrificed in God's temple. If that wasn't bad enough, they brought out the sacred scrolls of God's Word & threw the pig's blood on them before burning them. Josephus records:

When the king had built an idol altar upon God's Altar, he slew a swine upon it, & offered a sacrifice neither according to the law, nor the Jewish religious worship in that country. He also compelled them to forsake the worship of their own God, & to adore those whom he took to be gods, & made them build temples, & raise idol altars, in every city & village, & offer swine upon them every day.³

It was a dark time for Israel. Antiochus Epiphanes, the manifest god, demanded they bow down & worship his god. Many Jews wouldn't do it & 80,000 people were killed or imprisoned (2 Mac 5:11-14). As you can imagine, Antiochus' plans didn't go unchallenged. In the small village of Modi'in, a priest by the name of Mattathias & his 5 sons (Gaddis, Simon, Judas, Eleazar, & Jonathan) rebelled. Mattathias, his sons, & all the village were ordered to come to the town square. With a pig tied to an altar, Mattathias was ordered to sacrifice it. He'd then be the 1st to be forced to eat of it. Instead of complying with the order he slew the soldiers, overthrew the altar & cried out, *Let everyone who is zealous for the law and supports the covenant come out with me!*⁴ His actions & speech ignited a revolution. He went from being a priest to leader of an army. His determination & courage

³ *Antiquities of the Jews*, 6:12

⁴ *New Revised Standard Version*, 1 Mac 2:27.

transformed his followers into warriors using guerrilla warfare to defeat the armies of Antiochus. Before his death he appointed his son Judas (the hammer) as the general of the army saying, *he shall command the army for you & fight the battle against the peoples* (1 Mac 2:66). These men faced humanly impossible odds. But after a 3-year struggle, the Jews drove the Syrian army out. The traditional phrase, the acronym of which is on the dreidel, certainly fits: *A miracle happened here (there)*. They had met those dedicated to destroying Judaism & prevailed. This triumph carries the mark of God's intervention. He'd protected & empowered His people. For the triumphant Jews, the 1st order of business was the cleansing of the Temple. They began building a new altar & replacing all the sacred vessels. On the 25th of Kislev, 3 years to the day from **the abomination of desolation**, the altar & Temple were cleansed. 3 years to the day after the temple was defiled, the light was lit again in the Temple & the Jewish people began to celebrate.

At the very season & on the very day that the Gentiles had profaned it, it was dedicated with songs & harps & lutes & cymbals. All the people fell on their faces & worshiped & blessed Heaven, who had prospered them. So they celebrated the dedication of the altar for eight days, & joyfully offered burnt offerings; they offer a sacrifice of well-being & a thanksgiving offering.... Then Judas & his brothers & all the assembly of Israel determined that every year at that season the days of dedication of the altar should be observed with joy & gladness for eight days, beginning with the twenty-fifth day of the month of Chislev (1 Maccabees 4:54-56, 59).

According to Josephus,

...these things were done on the very same day on which their divine worship had fallen off, & was reduced to a profane & common use, after three years time; for so it was that the temple was made desolate by Antiochus... but it was DEDICATED anew on the same day.

The word *Hanukkah* is the Hebrew word for *dedication* & thus, this act of rededication of the temple through the efforts of Judas Maccabee gives this holiday its meaning. It's a great story, isn't it? Underdogs winning, evil tyrants defeated, & legends being born. If God hadn't intervened to preserve Jewish identity, there wouldn't have been a Jewish virgin named Mary to bring the promised Messiah into the world. As it's said, without Hanukkah there would be no Christmas.

2. Hanukkah's Embellishments There are 2 major sources that shed light on the beginning of Hanukkah. These are 1 & 2 Maccabees in the apocrypha (Jewish historical writings not included in the Bible) & the writings of Josephus. Today the major event surrounding the observance of Hanukkah is the lighting of the candles on a 9-branched menorah. However, in Maccabees there isn't any mention

of Hanukkah lights. The entire emphasis revolves around the victory & the cleansing & rededicating the Temple. The 1st person to mention lights as a part of Hanukkah was Josephus, & he wrote 200 years after the fact. This Jewish general turned traitor & then historian refers to Hanukkah as the *Feast of Lights*. Still later, in the Jewish writings of the Babylonian Talmud, an attempt is made to explain the importance of the lights. It suggests that when the Maccabees returned to cleanse the Temple they found only one flask of oil bearing the seal of the high priest, containing enough oil to light the menorah for just one day. But a miracle occurred & the oil lasted 8 days, allowing the priests to sanctify more oil. From this story the 9-branched Hanukkah candelabra arose. The one candle taller than the rest is called the *Shammash*, meaning *servant*, & is used to light each of the remaining candles on the following nights of Hanukkah. One Jewish historian says,

The very fact that legends were created in an effort to connect the festival with the lights arouses suspicion. Had this connection existed from the beginning, from the time that Hanukkah became a festival, there would have been no need to invent tales about them.

& then he's forced to say:

All these facts call for explanations & in accordance with what we know of the customs, there can be but one explanation—that the Hanukkah lights, originally, had nothing to do with Hanukkah.... Why the Hanukkah lights began to play an important role in the generation before the destruction of the 2nd Temple we cannot be sure.⁵

Two facts are undeniable: 1st, Hanukkah lights had no part in the original festival. 2nd, Hanukkah lights began shortly after the time of Jesus. The obvious question is, why were the lights added? There's only 1 logical answer. The Jewish historian just quoted flirted with it but couldn't bring himself to say it. God's Word isn't so reserved. Jesus said of Himself,

...I am the light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life (Jn 8:12). Shortly later, He said, While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world (9:5). & yet again, Are there not 12 hours in the day? If anyone walk in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world (11:9). & then, For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you... (12:35).

Two things are clear: 1st, each of these references to Jesus as the light of the world in Jn 8, 9, 11, & 12 surround chpt 10. What do we find in Jn 10? The feast of dedication, Hanukkah, being observed by Jesus. In each of these references where Jesus refers to Himself as the **Light of the world**, He's at

⁵ Hayyim Schauss, *The Jewish Festivals*

the Temple. I don't think it's too hard to understand, following His death, burial, & resurrection, that Jewish Christians would identify light with Jesus & the Temple at Hanukkah. Nor is hard to understand why one candle standing higher than the rest for the purpose of lighting the others is called the Servant candle. John wrote of Jesus, He **was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man** (Jn 1:9). The lights of Hanukkah were added after Jesus' death to point back to Him as the only One who is **the Light of the world**. Hanukkah candles shine & point their light onto the true manifest deity, Jesus incarnate. The Hanukkah lights point us to **the Light of the World** who was Himself a servant according to the prophecy of Isaiah (52-53). Jesus said **the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, & to give His life a ransom for many** (Mt 20:28). Shortly after His birth Jesus is called **a light for revelation to the Gentiles, & the glory of Your people Israel** (Lk 2:32). Isaiah, who predicted His redemptive work, spoke of this when he said, **The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them** (Is 9:2). Still with me? That's all background. Let's see what Jesus said at the Temple that Hanukkah.

3. Jesus' Declaration at Hanukkah Throughout OT history, from Eve, Noah, Abraham, David, Isaiah, Micah, & others, the Jews had been awaiting the arrival of their Messiah, the Christ, the anointed One of Yahweh. In Jn 10 Jesus declares Himself to be the One everyone was longing for. In John's gospel he records the reactions & responses of people regarding the identity of Jesus as the Christ. They've asked John the Baptist if he's the Christ (1:19-27; cf 3:28). They asked questions among themselves regarding the identity of the Messiah (7:26-27, 31, 40-42). John even records the Samaritan woman asking questions about the Christ (4:25, 29). But what kind of Messiah are they really expecting? If it's a Judas Maccabeus figure, then the One they're expecting is someone who'll deliver them from the bondage of the Romans. But that isn't what Jesus came to offer. **22-24**

The Jews deliberately encircled our Lord (that's what's suggested here) so He couldn't get away, forcing Him to face their question, *Are You the Messiah, or aren't You? Tell us plainly*. How does He answer?

A. Jesus is the Messiah as testified by His works. Jesus said, **25, 37-38**

His answer was, *I've already told you*. They pictured the Messiah as a conquering hero who, like Judas Maccabeus, would drive out the Romans, free the temple, & enable the Jewish nation to again gain control of the land. But Jesus gave no indication that He ever intended to do that. Therefore, for Him to say to them, *I am the Messiah*, would've been to arouse totally false hopes in their minds. But He did tell them by other means that He was the Messiah. Jesus claims His role as Messiah based on the works He's done. He says He's made it clear by His actions who He is, which weren't the works of a super-Maccabee revolutionary. Jesus was the kind of Messiah who, rather than destroying Rome, went to His death to atone for our sins & subsequently rose from the dead. The Maccabees did a great service by preventing the faith of Israel from being swallowed by Antiochus' Hellenistic plans. Yet history shows their descendants became corrupt, power-hungry, veering from the biblical ideals of kingship & priesthood. Could it be that we need something more than Maccabees to deliver us from something worse than Antiochus, to deliver us from our own sins? As the lights of the menorah are lit night after night, could it be that we should know Jesus as **the light of the world**, & accept the deliverance He offers? The works of Jesus point to His role as Messiah. John tells us at the end of his gospel the purpose for the signs he recorded,

Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name (Jn 20:30-31).

The signs Jesus did were far greater than the miracle of the Maccabees overthrowing Antiochus. His works showed He was the promised Messiah. Just a couple of months earlier, Jesus declared Himself to be the Good Shepherd, a Shepherd-King that's far greater than Judas Maccabee. Jesus said, **10:11**. This self-sacrificing leadership of Jesus echoes the courage & valor of the *Hammerer*, Judas Maccabeus, who himself eventually gave his life, dying in battle, to set Israel free & was called the *savior of Israel* (1 Mac 9:14-21). Maybe Jesus as a Maccabean figure is why John ends his gospel this way: **there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written (21:25)**. Compare that ending with how the writer of 1 Maccabees ends the account of Judas: *Now the rest of the acts of Judas, & his wars & the brave deeds that he did, & his greatness, have not been recorded, but they*

were very many (1 Mac 9:22). The parallels are striking & one can infer that John compares Jesus to the fallen Jewish hero from their recent history. But unlike Judas Maccabeus, Jesus doesn't offer political power. What Jesus gives by His own death is eternal life. He says, **28**

This is a promise greater than overthrowing oppressive governments. This is a promise greater than what people expected. The victory Jesus offers extends beyond earthly life with a divine guarantee.

No one can snatch His sheep out of the hands of the Good Shepherd. & then Jesus adds, **29**

This is a wonderful & powerful truth. The connections aren't lost on the religious leaders, but they deny that Jesus is the Christ because of their continued unbelief. Jesus rebukes them, **26-27**

Are you Jesus' sheep? Do you believe? Do you listen to the voice of Jesus? Do you follow Him? If you say you don't yet believe, will you be like the religious leaders that continue in that unbelief? The evidence is clear: Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah. Will you believe in Him? Finally, Jesus is the Messiah, the consecrated Son of God (30-39), as He claims to be God Himself. Jesus says, **30-32**

Jesus claimed not only that He's the Christ, but also that He's God. Since both Jesus & the Father are involved in the preservation of Jesus's sheep, Jesus can say, **I & the Father are one** (30). Much discussion is found on whether that statement is a clear statement of deity. But the context shows the Jews understood Jesus' statement as a claim of deity. How do we know? Because they picked up stones to kill Him. **33**

Jesus wasn't claiming to be an additional or competing God. But that He's the eternal Word that was with God & was God (1:1). He became flesh & dwelt among us (1:14). Jesus isn't a mere man, He's God in human flesh. Jesus, then, appeals to Ps 82:6, to prove His point. Without going into detail, Jesus' logic is simple: If human judges can be called **gods** in the OT, then wouldn't this be even more appropriate for Jesus who is truly the Son of God? Notice how Jesus referred to Himself in vs 36. He is the One **whom the Father sanctified or consecrated or set apart & sent into the world**. What is the original name of the feast being celebrated here? The *Feast of Dedication*, also known as the *Feast of re-consecration*, which commemorates the sanctifying of the temple after Antiochus desecrated it. Interestingly, in the beginning of John, Jesus referred to Himself as the temple (2:19-21). Jesus is sanctified by the Father & sent into the world with the mission of delivering His people. This leads us

to the all-important question: How should we respond to Jesus? We find 3 kinds of responses to Jesus in this passage.

A. Response #1: Confusion Some were confused about who Jesus is. In vs 24 they wanted a clear answer as to who He was. Maybe this is you. You may be new to Christianity or you grew up in a Christian family, but you're confused about who Jesus is. Some view Jesus as merely a great teacher or a good prophet, but they deny His claims about Himself. Jesus claims to be the Christ, the Anointed One chosen by God to be the only Savior of the world. He also claims to be fully God, having the same essence as the Father, but distinct in person. He's also fully man. He's the eternal Word who became flesh. What do you believe about the identity of Jesus? You can't be a follower of Jesus if you're confused about who He is. Do you know who He is? Many say they believe in Jesus, but they believe in a Jesus they've created. They believe in a Jesus who's merely a man, a good teacher, or a prophet. But if you say you believe in Jesus, you don't truly believe in Him unless you believe everything He claims to be.

B. Response #2: Unbelief Others hated Jesus in unbelief (25-26, 31, 39). At the end of Jesus' conversation with the Jews, the hardness of their unbelieving hearts is clear. **39** Maybe you aren't like the Jews who wrongfully view Jesus as a competing god. Maybe you're hostile because He claims to be the only way to God. Jesus is the only way. If you say there are many ways to God & Jesus says He's the only way, you don't really believe Him. Repent of your unbelief.

C. Response #3: Faith Lastly & positively, many believed in Jesus (40-42). This is how John ends this section. **42**

Jesus, & Jesus alone, is the Messiah we desperately need. How do you respond to Jesus? Would you believe & put your trust in Him & in Him alone?

How does all this bear on our celebrating Jesus' birthday on Dec 25th? I think we'd all agree that Dec 25 is almost certainly not the actual date of His birth. So why do we celebrate on this date? One possibility is that it was on the 25th day of the Jewish month Kislev (corresponding roughly to our December) that Antiochus desecrated the Temple. 1 & 2 Maccabees go out of their way to stress the fact that it was exactly 3 years later, to the very day, that the Temple was cleansed & rededicated.

Light had defeated darkness, Yahweh had defeated the pagan deity, God had defeated Satan. Think about it: What was the purpose of the Temple? That God should dwell within it & Israel would know His glory was present with them. What was Jesus in human flesh? Incarnate deity, a Man who was fully God & displayed God's glory. John wrote, **No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*** (Jn 1:18). That is, the glory of the invisible God could be seen in the visible Son. The writer of Hebrews described Jesus this way, **He is the radiance of the Father's glory & the exact representation of His nature...** (1:3). In other words, Jesus was an outshining of God's glory (not simply a mirror-like reflection) & an exact representation of His nature. God's glory shone out of the Temple & His glory shone out of His Son, the God-Man Jesus. So close was the relationship between the Temple, in which God dwelt, & the flesh of Jesus, in which deity lived, that when pressed for a sign to authenticate His life & teaching to the Jewish leadership, Jesus said in Jn 2, **Destroy this temple, & in 3 days I will raise it up** (19). Then this commentary is added, **He was speaking of the temple of His body** (21). The Temple had housed the glory of God; so too had the flesh of Jesus. That's why, in a description of the new Jerusalem, John wrote: **I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty & the Lamb are its temple** (Rv 21:22). When the church, long after the actual day had been lost to antiquity, chose the date to celebrate the day when God incarnate came, what better association than the Temple, where deity had also dwelt, & the 25th of Kislev, which was already established to commemorate the cleansing & rededication of the Temple as a dwelling place for God?⁶ This date testifies to the fact that at the birth of Jesus deity was dwelling in a human temple & shining out to give light in the midst of darkness. In the simplest terms, the early church could have chosen Dec 25th to remind the world that God came to earth to dwell in human flesh & from out of that flesh He gave light & life to all who'd put their trust in Him. Jesus Christ is the Light of the world. We see this in the lights of Christmas & in the lights of Hanukkah. Hanukkah is a reminder of the faithfulness of God. Satan, through Antiochus, had planned to destroy God's people through assimilation & annihilation. Had he been successful, there would have been no more Jewish people, no Messiah to come, & most tragically of all, no Calvary. God is faithful to His

⁶ *The Temple: Its Ministry & Services as They Were at the Time of Jesus Christ*, p 334

promise to preserve His people; He's the true Light of the world, & it's through Him that all people have the light of life (Jn 8:12). Men & women would forever be lost in sin, without hope. & so a great miracle did happen there. It's not a jar of oil, but is God's faithfulness to His people & the fulfilled promises of the Messiah that continue to give true significance to Hanukkah today. Without Hanukkah there would be no Christmas. Let's keep the *Shammash*, the Servant, the Light which brings light to others, the center of our Advent season. PRAY

Communion

Anyone who's grown up in church is able to give a good answer to the question, *What did Jesus do for you?* Usually, they'll say, *He died on the cross for my sins.* That's a true & profound answer, but it's only half right. If He just needed to die on the cross to save us from our sins, He could have descended from heaven as a man on the morning of Good Friday, gone straight to Golgotha, died on the cross, risen, & left again. Our sin problem would be fixed. He didn't need to be born to Mary, go through all the trials & tribulations of growing up in this fallen world, or endure the hatred of the religious leaders of His day. But Jesus didn't live those 30+ years for nothing. In order for Him to qualify as our Redeemer, it wasn't enough for Him simply to go to the cross & be crucified. If Jesus had only paid for our sins, He'd have succeeded only in taking us back to square one. We'd no longer be guilty, but we'd still have absolutely no righteousness to bring before God. So our Redeemer needed not only to die, but also to live a life of perfect obedience. The righteousness that He lived could then be transferred to all who put their faith in Him. Just as your sin is transferred to Him on the cross when you trust in Him, His righteousness is transferred to your account in God's sight. So when we stand before God on judgment day, God will see Jesus & His righteousness, which will be our cover. By His obedience, He redeemed His people for eternity. Jesus came as a Baby so that He might live a sinless, righteous life & then die & shed His blood in our place. This is the part of the Christmas story that we too often forget: Those cute little hands, fashioned by the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb, were made so that nails might be driven through them into the cross. Those chubby baby feet, pink & unable to walk, would one day walk up a dusty hill to be lifted up on a cross. That sweet infant's head with sparkling eyes & eager mouth was

formed so that someday Roman soldiers might force a crown of thorns onto it. That tender body, warm & soft, wrapped in swaddling clothes, would one day be ripped open by a spear. The blood flushing those rosy cheeks was made so that it might be shed on our behalf. That little, smiling mouth was made so that it might shout triumphantly, **It is finished!** Jesus was born to die.

When the hour had come, He reclined at the table, & the apostles with Him. And He said to them, *I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God* & when He had taken some bread & given thanks, He broke it & gave it to them, saying, *This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me* (Lk 22:14-16, 19).

Jesus was born so that He could give His life, His all for you. He died so that you might have new life, joyful life, eternal life with Him.

As Jesus passed the cup to His disciples He said, ***This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood*** (Lk 22:20). Jesus established a new covenant between God & man, one in which He became the sacrifice & in which He gives us His righteousness. We drink of the cup remembering our Savior's birth, life, death, & resurrection, thanking Him with great joy for saving us.