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SYMBOLS OF GOD'S GRACE

PURIM AND HANUKKAH – PART 1

Judaism was on the verge of being extinguished in the second century before Christ. The Hellenistic (Greek) culture was being forced upon them by evil Syrian dictators like Antiochus Epiphanes. Most Jews had accepted this culture and had given up their Jewish faith.

The temple had been desecrated and the “eternal flame” of the temple’s menorah had long been extinguished. Judaism was being wiped out.

Judas Maccabeus was raised up by God to restore “Jewish” worship. Through him, God miraculously restored the eternal flame of the menorah’s candlelight in the temple. Through this historic action, Judaism was restored. This miraculous incident is now celebrated as the eight days of Hanukkah where God saved Israel from extinction.

Queen Esther’s bold action also saved Israel from extinction about 300 years earlier. That event is celebrated in the Feast of Purim, which is one month before Passover (Easter).

These two holiday periods are celebrated based on historical events. The other Jewish feasts were biblically set by God. Although Purim and Hanukkah were set by man rather than God, they are still symbols of the great mercy and grace of Almighty God. Such symbols carry important significance.

What about the symbols that accompany our traditional celebration of Christmas? A few dogmatic Christians severely criticize Christmas celebrations as being bad due to some pagan origins of certain practices. These people fail to see the positive faith aspects of Christmas, but there is good to be found in them.

Tomorrow we shall address those practices from an aspect of faith.