

Hanukkah: Rapture Themes

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THE final biblical holiday of 2023—Hanukkah—begins the evening of December 7.

While Hanukkah is not the first festival one thinks of when it comes to the Rapture, there are at least 10 ways it points to the “blessed hope,” the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ:

1. THE NINTH MONTH

Hanukkah occurs in the ninth month, Kislev. The number nine appears 49 times (the number of Jubilee) in Scripture and signifies completeness or finality.

2. ‘MIDNIGHT’ OF THE YEAR

Astronomically, the year is a circle. Dividing the circle into halves at the spring and fall equinoxes, the winter solstice around Hanukkah marks the halfway point, or ‘midnight,’ of the dark (nighttime) portion of the year. This is significant because midnight is when the bridegroom comes to gather the virgins: “At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’” (Matt. 25:6).

3. ‘THIRD WATCH’ OF THE YEAR

Dividing the circle of the year into four ‘watches’ at the equinoxes and solstices, the winter solstice around Hanukkah marks the end of the third watch. In Luke, Jesus warns that He may come during the third watch: “And if he shall come in ... the third watch, and find them so [watching], blessed are those servants” (Luke 12:38 KJV).

4. DEDICATING THE TEMPLE

Hanukkah commemorates the cleansing and rededication of the Temple to the Lord, after the Jews recaptured it from the Greek army and Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who had defiled it. The cleansing and dedication of the Temple points to the dedication of the ultimate Temple—the Church, or Body of Christ—at Jesus’ coming.

5. A SECOND FEAST OF TABERNACLES

Hanukkah, the festival that commemorates the rededication of the Temple, is patterned after the original feast of dedication, Tabernacles (2 Macc. 1:9, 18; 1 Kings 8). Since Hanukkah is basically a delayed observance of Tabernacles, some Jewish scholars teach that it marks the true conclusion of the High Holy Days.

6. JESUS AT THE GATHERING PLACE

In John chapter 10, it is on Hanukkah that Jesus appears at the Temple area called Solomon's porch (vv. 22, 23). Solomon's porch was a place of assembly for the early Church, and is believed to be the location of the gathering of the saints on the first Pentecost, when the Church Age began (Acts 2; 5:12).

7. SPIRITUAL HARVEST

In John chapter 4, it is around Hanukkah, when spring is yet four months away, that Jesus surveys the spiritual field and deems it ripe for harvest: "You have a saying, 'Four more months and then the harvest.' But I tell you, take a good look at the fields; the crops are now ripe and ready to be harvested!" (John 4:35).

8. ENOCH AND HANUKKAH

The name Enoch means "dedicated or consecrated," and is derived from the same Hebrew word *Hanokh* used for Hanukkah. This is significant because Enoch, who was supernaturally taken up to be with God, is a picture of the raptured Church. What's more, Enoch was raptured when he was 365 years old (Gen. 5:23, 24), the same number of days in the Gregorian year that ends around Hanukkah.

9. A GREAT SHAKING

It was on Kislev 24, the date that would later become Hanukkah Eve, that God gave Haggai a prophecy about a great shaking at the end of the age:

"The word of the Lord came to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, saying ... I am going to shake the heavens and the earth. I will [in the distant future] overthrow the thrones of kingdoms and destroy the power of the kingdoms of the [ungodly] nations" (Hagg. 2:20–22; Heb. 12:26).

Correspondingly, the Rapture will shake the heavens and earth (Rev. 6:12–17).

10. A TIME OF SHOPPING AND FEASTING

Kislev, the month of Hanukkah and Christmas, is when people worldwide are shopping and feasting. This is significant because Jesus says they will be “eating, drinking, buying and selling,” when Judgment Day arrives (Luke 17). It is also said that people will be “planting” and “marrying.” Kislev–December, the final month of fall, is when wheat and barley are planted in Israel, and is considered an extremely auspicious time for weddings.

In summary, Hanukkah is . . .

- A time of completion, or finality.
- ‘Midnight’ of the biblical year.
- The end of the ‘third watch.’
- A time of dedicating the Temple.
- A delayed Feast of Tabernacles.
- A time when Jesus is at the Temple.
- A time of spiritual harvest.
- A time of shaking, or judgment.
- A time of buying, selling, eating drinking, planting and marrying.

The rapture themes of Hanukkah remind us that the ultimate festival of dedication lies ahead. Soon, on a day no one knows, the ‘Temple’ that has been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb—the Church of Jesus Christ—will stand spotless before the Lord.

NOTES:

1. Hanukkah (general):

https://www.chabad.org/holidays/chanukah/article_cdo/aid/102911/jewish/What-Is-Hanukkah.htm

2. The number nine in Scripture: <https://www.biblestudy.org/bibleref/meaning-of-numbers-in-bible/9.html>

3. Hanukkah as a second Feast of Tabernacles:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Maccabees+10:6&version=nrsvce>
<https://www.thetorah.com/article/the-biblical-building-blocks-of-chanukah>

4. That Hanukkah is patterned after the Feast of Tabernacles explains why the Hallel (Ps. 113–118), originally sung only at Tabernacles, is still sung at synagogue Hanukkah services today.

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Maccabees+10:6&version=nrsvce>

5. Hanukkah as the conclusion of the High Holy Days and time of final judgment:

<https://aish.com/final-judgment-on-chanukah/>

6. Solomon's porch and the gathering of the saints on Pentecost:

<https://hoshanarabbah.org/blog/2018/03/29/solomons-porch/>
<https://torahportions.ffoz.org/disciples/acts/pentecost-solomons-portico-and.html>

7. Enoch etymology: <https://www.etymonline.com/word/enoch>

8. Haggai chapter 2 implies that Kislev 24 is when the foundation of the Temple was laid. It is believed that this day was kept as a day of gathering in the Temple, commemorating its foundation, which is why the Greeks chose it as a day of defilement, and why the Jews chose it as a day of dedication.

<https://www.thetorah.com/article/the-biblical-building-blocks-of-chanukah>

9. Americans are “doom spending” this Kislev–December: <https://www.cnbc.com/2023/11/29/americans-are-doom-spending-heres-why-thats-a-problem.html>

<https://www.cnbc.com/2023/11/25/black-friday-shoppers-spent-a-record-9point8-billion-in-us-online-sales-up-7point5percent-from-last-year.html>

10. Hanukkah–Kislev is an auspicious time for weddings:

https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/476754/jewish/Approved-Dates-for-a-Wedding.htm

11. The ultimate Temple of God is the body of believers called the Church (1 Cor. 3:16, 17).

12. Hanukkah events in modern times:

- On Hanukkah Eve in 1917, British forces liberated Jerusalem from centuries of Muslim–Turkish rule.
- The week before Hanukkah in 1947, the UN voted in favor of the creation of an independent Jewish state in the Land of Israel.
- The week before Hanukkah in 2017, Donald Trump became the first foreign leader in modern history to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.