

## **Hanukkah Means Dedication**

### Holding on to Truth in an Age of Change

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I'll be honest: there is an area of my life where I deal with an obvious duplicity. I like technology but at the same time I cling to the past. Actually, I'm talking about books. Okay, I admit it, I'm a bibliophile (I don't like the destructive sound of "bookworm"). Still, I'm very taken with the new technology that lets me read books on an eReader, especially the kind that "flips the page" on the screen, just like a real book. Being able to carry thousands of books with me in a device that fits into a pocket of my briefcase is a dream come true.

At the same time, reading from a digital screen is just not the same as holding a book in my hands, thumbing through the pages, and even underlining important sentences and writing minuscule notes in the margins. Even better is to open a previously owned book and wonder whose hands and eyes graced its pages before me. In that regard, there is something especially meaningful when I open a book that belonged to my Dad—to see his underlinings and notes, and to realize that I am engaged in the same pursuit of truth as he was.

In our technological times, libraries that want to keep current are moving more and more to digital formats and reducing the number of conventional books accordingly. In many cases, books printed before 1900 are being discarded for newer titles dealing with the same subject. Recently I've added over 100 books to my library that are all discards from a local seminary library. Many of these books were written by renowned scholars of their day. As I've begun to look through them, I am amazed at the wealth of information they contain—good information and good insights. But I'm saddened to realize that in our times, a great deal of older but fine biblical scholarship is being dismissed as out-dated and no longer useful.

So here I am with a book printed in 1823 in one hand and a digital eBook in the other. I plan to keep the best of both worlds.

As we come to the time of Hanukkah, the focus is on dedication, which is what the word "Hanukkah" means. We celebrate the goodness of God in preserving our people during the times of the Maccabees, and the re-dedication of the Temple as the place He ordained for worship. It is also a time to consider our own dedication to God and to our worship of Him—a time to renew our resolve to stand firm in the truth of the Scriptures and not assimilate to the latest fads in the theological shifting sands of our time.

In some ways, current trends in theology could be compared to modern libraries that are culling the old books from their shelves and replacing them with updated ones. Doctrines that were considered essential and foundational in the recent past are being stamped "Discarded" and removed as out-dated and unacceptable to the modern, enlightened mind. We're being taught that God would never punish the wicked eternally, that eternal salvation is really based on a sliding scale, that when we suffer in this life, we're actually atoning for our sins, and that when Yeshua promised to build His *ekklesia*, He had a duplex in mind. What people don't seem to realize is that the librarian has stamped "Discarded" in the book we call the "Bible."

We might not be surprised at such teachings if they were coming from the post-modern, neo-orthodox folks. They've been telling us that our Bible is out-dated for decades. What's alarming is that this is happening in our own messianic circles. And what is even more alarming is that no one seems to be alarmed about it.

Maybe the lack of alarm can be attributed to the slick double-speak that is being used. We're actually being told that no means yes, that divine judgment is actually a blessing, that absence is really presence, and that rejecting Yeshua really means accepting Him! "Earth to Scottie, Earth to Scottie, check your oxygen levels!"

I don't in any way want to diminish the festive and celebratory nature of Hanukkah! I like *latkes* and *suff-*

*ganiyot* as much as any one, and lighting a candle each night of the festival is a tradition that is both joyful and meaningful. So let's celebrate! But in our celebration let us not forget that our people endured great hardship before the victory was won, and that those who participated in that first celebration of Hanukkah did so while still bearing the scars of battle.

The question, then, is whether we are willing to engage the battle for the truth of the Scriptures, or just "go with the flow"—whether we will give into a theology of accommodation or stand firm on what the Bible teaches. So take hold of the "old book," the Bible (whether your copy is well-worn or fresh, pristine text on your eReader or computer), and read it for yourself. Read it and re-read it, and place its words upon your heart. Then commit yourself to follow its timeless truths through the power of the Ruach HaKodesh regardless of the cost. Take every teaching you hear or read and put it against the Scriptures. If it agrees, bless the Lord and treasure what you have learned. If it does not agree, jettison it as unworthy of the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3). As we dedicate ourselves to the eternal truths of the Scriptures, we will live out the ancient-yet-always-up-to-date truths that, by His mercy, God has so graciously revealed to us. Happy Hanukkah!