

Hanukkah – Part 2

By James Jacob Prasch

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The Jewish Holiday Season

In John 9, Jesus does a messianic miracle: He gives sight to a blind person, blind from birth.

As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" (John 9:1-2)

"Who sinned, him or his parents?"

There were three pilgrim feasts described in Leviticus 23 when the Jews had to come from all over to Jerusalem to celebrate. The Spring feasts were "*Pesach*" and "*Ha Shavu'ot*" (Weeks, Pentecost), and in the Autumn the Feast of Tabernacles, "*Ha Sukkot*". However, by Jesus' day, Hanukkah became a fourth festival when a lot of Jews (although it was not mandatory by the Torah), would have come to Jerusalem for Hanukkah.

Instead of walking all the way down from Galilee just to turn around and go back, and then having to come back again several weeks later for Hanukkah, it is possible that Jesus would have hung out in Jerusalem. It was a long journey then by foot.

So this became the Jewish holiday season, that lasts from Autumn into early Winter. We have a lot of holidays together.

The Issue of Blindness

Unlike in the Pagan world where literacy was only for the aristocracy, every Jew had to be able to read the Torah to worship God. So to have been born blind would have been seen as a curse.

And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him. (John 9:2-3)

"Who sinned, this person or his parents?" Jesus said, "Neither one."

Unrepentant sin can cause illness, as shown in 1 Corinthians and in Psalm 32. But to say that some illness or birth defect *has* to be the result of some sin is ridiculous. Jesus clearly said it isn't.

He began to develop the Hanukkah theme here by identifying Himself as the Light of the world, building up to the Hanukkah celebration in John 10. John is the most festive of the four Gospels, presenting Jesus as the Passover Lamb. In John, Jesus reveals Himself as the fulfillment of the

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holidays the most. Throughout most of John's Gospel, Jesus is depicted as going to or from Jerusalem, or getting ready to go, or just come back. John is very Jerusalem-centered and diligent to show Jesus as the messianic fulfillment of the holidays. Here Jesus brought up the subject of light as the people were focused on lights that represented the Jews being called as a light to the nations.

"We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." (John 9:4-5)

The Jews are called to be "owr goyim", the light to the nations, the light of the world. He formed the clay of spittle and put it on the eyes of the young boy.

When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came back seeing. (John 9:6-7)

And go wash in the Pool of Shiloach. "Shiloach" is the same word we get "apostle", one who is sent. The Pool of Siloam was a pool at the end of Hezekiah's tunnel. It drew water from the Kidron and then it went to the Pool of Shiloach through the tunnel. It is still there. You can walk through it. "One who was sent". Go wash in the Pool of Shiloach.

He answered, "The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went away and washed, and I received sight." (John 9:11)

The Salvific Message of the Miracles

The healing miracles of Jesus have to be understood this way: They were miracles only the Messiah could do, such as making the blind see and the deaf hear. Once neurological tissue is dead, it doesn't regenerate. If the optic nerve is dead, that person is not going to see again. Even today it would take an act of God to rejuvenate nerve tissue.

He did miracles for three reasons: The first was obviously the compassion of God. Second, the miracles were emblematic of His messiahship. And third, they are demonstrations of salvation in some way.

The healing miracles in the Gospel of John always demonstrate salvation. In John 5 He told the paralytic, "Pick up your pallet and go your way; sin no more" (John 5:11-14) Now that was a case where sin caused the paralysis. Why did Jesus tell him, "Take your pallet" when he doesn't need it anymore? Because it's the piece of wood to which his flesh was confined. What Jesus was

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saying was, "Pick up your cross, live a crucified life, don't sin anymore." In figure, that's what He was saying midrashically, in figure. The guy didn't need it any more. We're all lame until we pick up the cross. We can't walk in the Spirit until we pick up the cross. Well, we're all blind until we see Jesus.

But notice Jesus says, "Go wash in the Pool of Shiloach". Again, baptism. The restoration of sight is always in proportion to obedience to the Lord. The more you do His will, the clearer you're going to see. You didn't get it all at once. When somebody is born, they don't see at once. When somebody's born again they don't see at once. But baptism is an eye opener. You begin to understand your salvation when you understand co-burial and co-resurrection.

The Rejection of the Saved by the Unsaved

He continued to develop this theme. The boy must have been bar mitzvah age, because his parents say he's of age.

His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now sees, we do not know who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself" (John 9:20-21).

Notice that his family rejected him.

Therefore the neighbors, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, "Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?" Others were saying, "This is he," still others were saying, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the one" (John 9:8-9).

They said, "Well, we thought it was him, but it can't be him, it must be somebody who looks like him." The people who knew him couldn't recognize him. Some said it was him, and others said no it was not him, it was somebody who only looked like him. And he kept saying, "I am the one".

That's the way unsaved people will always react when somebody gets born again. You're not the same person to them. "That can't be him. Jacob Prasch? He used to be a cocaine addict. I used to score coke from that guy! He dealt drugs in high school. That's not him. It just looks like him." Unsaved people always think that way, that it's not us. It's us, but it's not us. They'll always be confused about our identity once we come to know Jesus.

But even the family couldn't handle it. Now remember, this is a Jewish setting. In verse 22, his parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews.

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His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue . For this reason his parents said, "He is of age; ask him" (John 9:22-23).

As I always point out in John, there is a major translation problem with the word "Jew", "Ioudaios". It doesn't mean people who were "Jewish" – they were **ALL** "Jewish", Jesus was "Jewish" – it meant the religious establishment in and around Jerusalem and the Judeans, the people they controlled. Even in modern Israel you'll see a lot more religious Jews and a lot more religious influence in Jerusalem than you will in Haifa or Tel Aviv. It meant the "Judeans", the religious establishment – the Sanhedrin and the people they controlled.

And so, Jesus opened his eyes and we're told Jesus found this guy wandering around.

Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, He said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

We had a joke in Israel, but it is no joke: When a "frum" (an Orthodox Jew) gets saved, the family has a funeral for him, but when a Muslim gets saved they also have a funeral for him, only it's his own funeral.

Well, what does it say? Jesus found him. "Your family might reject you, but Jesus will find you, too."

The Effects of Willful Blindness

Jesus turned His attention to the Pharisees:

Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

In John 9 Jesus was comparing the willful blindness of the Pharisees to the unwillful blindness of this young guy. We're all born blind. But from God's perspective there's a big difference between blindness and **willful** blindness. Those who are unwillfully blind will always invoke the **mercy** of Christ; those who are willfully blind will always invoke the **judgment** of Christ.

This sets the stage for Hanukkah because it hearkens back to the time of the Maccabees. Can't you people see what's going on? They're outlawing the reading of the Word of God, they're outlawing the practice of "brit milah" (ritual circumcision), they're bringing this Pagan stuff into the church – it's becoming idolatry. Can't you see what they're doing?

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Rejecting the True for the False

Then Jesus gave His pastoral discourse, which goes back to Psalm 23. It has Maccabean allusions to it because they were the true shepherds. Most of the clergy went along with the people

“A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers” (John 10:5).

Characteristic of John’s Gospel is the frequent reference to the Antichrist more than any of the other apostles, even more than Paul. In his Gospel he deals with Antichrist; in his epistle he refers to the Antichrist (1 John), and in the book of Revelation he fully reveals him. In his Gospel he quotes Jesus’ many references to the man of lawlessness: *“If another comes in his own name, him you will believe”* (John 5:43). *“You are going to reject Me, but you will follow the false Christs,”* ultimately, the Antichrist. He will make a treaty with them. He will deceive them.

In any event, John is always alluding to things about the Antichrist. Well, this is a general truth, but it becomes an eschatological truth. *“Those who are really Mine, they are going to know the difference between Christ and Antichrist.”*

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice” (John 10:1-4).

Somebody will know if something is of Jesus or not. If you believe the Bible, if you have the Holy Spirit, you will know if something hasn’t got it. You’ll know. *“My sheep hear My voice.”* (Jn. 10:27)

This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them (John 10:6).

A division occurred again among the Jews because of these words. Many of them were saying, “He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?” Others were saying, “These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?” (vs. 19).

Again, if you operate in the Spirit of Jesus and if you minister in His character, those who are willfully blind are going to say that about you.

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Jesus at Hanukkah

Now look at verse 22.

At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem;

This was Hanukkah. Now again, “*at that time*” is specific. All this other stuff that is going on in chapter 9 and 10 is setting the stage for what’s going to come.

it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon.

Now the Portico of Solomon today would be approximately located to the east of the Mosque of Aqsa, on the temple mount, on the southeast corner overlooking where the Kidron begins to turn into the Tyropean. And it was from there the apostle James would later be martyred, thrown off from the tower above it.

The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, “How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.” Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father’s name, these testify of Me.

Now, the term “works” here would have the connotation, “*semeion mipla’ot*”, “signs and wonders”. “These bear witness to Me.” This goes back to John 5, the five things that bear witness to Jesus.

“But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.” The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, “I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?” (John 10:26-32).

Now remember, we know everything that was in the temple from the Mishna. The only stones that were in Solomon’s portico were, of course, the stones of the disassembled altar.

In the story of Daniel, the prophet predicts what will happen with Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabees. Antiochus is a major type of the Antichrist, who slaughtered a pig in the temple before an image of Zeus, the Greek god, to whom he gave his own physical features. This is a major type of the Antichrist. And the altar – the stones of the altar (the “*mizbeach*”, we call them in Hebrew) – were holy. The Jews couldn’t throw the stones away. But neither could they

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sacrifice on it anymore because they were defiled by pig's blood – an un-kosher animal – sacrificed to another god. They didn't know whether to throw them away – they couldn't throw them away because they were holy – but they couldn't use them anymore, they had to build a new altar because they were defiled. So they had the stones stacked up in the temple, waiting for the Messiah to come.

At Hanukkah they believed the Messiah was going to come and tell them what to do with the stones. So the Messiah comes at Hanukkah and what do they do with the stones? They pick up the stones and try to stone the Messiah. It would be hard to believe those weren't the stones of the altar based on what it says in the Mishna, because there were no other stones in Solomon's portico. And the Mishna records everything in some detail. So based on the historical record, it would seem probable those were the stones.

The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God." Jesus answered them, "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I said you are gods'? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"

The Response of Rejection

We need to understand this idea of "you are gods". The best way to translate it is small "g", from "El Elohim". God is the God of the universe. He made us in His image and likeness and gave us dominion over the creation. So we would be, as it were, a god over the creation, subordinate to the God who is Creator and act as His adjutants. Once that was forfeited through sin, Satan became the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4). But not "God". You've got to understand the context. The god of the world, instead of man, became Satan. In other words, to a giraffe, man is god. We have dominion and power. The relationship to us of a giraffe is like the relationship of us to God. We know He is the Creator. That is what is meant by "you are gods," not this "little god" stuff taught by Ken Copeland and Paul Crouch.

Now, while we are made in God's image and likeness, Jesus is **NOT** made in His image and likeness. Jesus is God who became a man. The fullness of the Father dwells in Him bodily. If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus.

Under the Law, under the Torah, you could know **about** God. The Jews could know **about** God through the Torah. You can know **about** God in the Old Testament. Under the New Testament, through being born again, you can **know** God. There's a big difference between knowing **about** God and **knowing** God. If you know Jesus, you know God. You don't know Him as well as you

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would like to or as well as you are going to, but you know Him. And even before we get to heaven, we all have a chance to get to know Him better.

But He uses this term, “I am the Son of God”. This harkens back to John 8 where He uses the term “*ego ami*” – “I AM the I AM”. It is exactly how Yahweh identified Himself to the Hebrews through Moses in the book of Exodus and they wanted to stone Him for that.

“If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father” (John 10:37-38).

Here He is arguing the Hebrew concept of “*achtut*”, of oneness from the “*Sh’ma*”, the same term used for marital unity, of marital consummation: becoming one flesh.

Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him, and He eluded their grasp. And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing, and He was staying there. Many came to Him and were saying, “While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true.” Many believed in Him there (John 10:39-42).

Compare the Theologies

This is the Hebrew feast of signs and wonders. Look at the theology of Jesus compared to the theology of the modern church.

It began with the late John Wimber. He co-wrote a book with Kevin Springer called “*Power Evangelism*”, and had an influence on others including Nicky Gumble of Holy Trinity Brompton. The premise was if unsaved people see signs and wonders, they would believe. These are power encounters between the demonic and the divine, and if they see the signs and wonders they’ll believe. Signs and wonders were the key to belief.

Well, without even dealing with the issue that so many of the signs are bogus and so many of the miracles cannot be medically authenticated, is it true? Do signs and wonders cause people to commit their lives to Christ? If were true, then why did Jesus say, “*For which of these signs do you stone Me*”? (Jn. 10:32) He made a blind person see and their reaction? They wanted to kill Him anyway. If signs and wonders are the key to belief, how do you explain Hanukkah in John 10? Remember, “*these signs follow*” (Mark 16:20).

The only thing Jesus had to do was put on a show for Herod and He wouldn’t have been crucified. All He had to do was the “Kenny/Benny” stuff: Put on a show. “*A wicked and*

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adulterous generation seeks a sign" (Matthew 12:39). When you see people flock to see Kenny and Benny and this stuff, and going to Holy Trinity Brompton or to Kensington Temple, that is a wicked and adulterous generation seeking a sign.

I'm not a Cessasionist. I believe in all the gifts of the Spirit, I believe in miracles. The view that the gifts of the Spirit ended with the Apostles is a doctrinal error. God does miracles now. God does heal people now. There is the real and there is the counterfeit. Just because much of what we see today is bogus that does not mean there isn't the real. I've seen the real. Having said that, I would rather see nothing than see a counterfeit. *"These signs follow."* They were never the focus.

I always say Jesus never had a "miracle crusade". He had miracles, but never a miracle crusade. Jesus never had a "healing crusade". He had healings, but never a healing crusade. He had **repentance** crusades.

The Place They Believed

Where did the people believe? Where they saw the show? Where they saw the signs? Where they saw the miracles? No. Although John did no miracle, everything John said about Jesus was true.

Faith cometh by seeing? No, it is not John Wimber, it's John the Baptist. Faith doesn't come by seeing, *"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing the Word of God"* (Romans 10:17).

The first thing Jesus did when He began His public ministry is He went out to the Jordan to get baptized. Why the Jordan? We need to understand the connotation of the Jordan and what it meant to the Jews. That is where Joshua first entered the land. In other words, when things get that bad for that long, you have got to go back to the beginning.

"While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true." Many believed in Him there.

Not where there were miracles, but where the Word was preached. Signs and wonders are not, and have never been, the key to belief.

The Wrong View

The Jews had a wrong view of Hanukkah. In other words, they had a wrong view of "dedication". Hanukkah was not simply "dedication"; actually, Hannukah was **RE**-dedication.

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Once again, the temple had been defiled. People are not going to believe until the temple's rededicated. People are not going to believe until the true Gospel is preached. Save the Frank Sinatra records for Hoboken, New Jersey – not for the house of God. That is what it is saying.

John performed no sign. *“For which one of these signs do you stone Me?”* They had it all wrong. What they wanted – what the Jews wanted – was a Messiah who would come in the character of the Maccabees and get rid of the Romans the way the Maccabees got rid of the Greeks. As long as they thought Jesus was going to be a political Messiah and give them the kingdom then, they were all for Him. As soon as they found out that instead of making a right turn to the Fortress Antonio, He made a left and kicked the money changers out of the temple, the same crowd was yelling, *“Crucify Him!”* (Luke 23:21).

He wasn't concerned with the Romans; God could take care of them any time. He was concerned with those who were prostituting the Word of God and profiteering on the blood of the Lamb. The Maccabees weren't concerned with Antiochus, they were concerned with Menelaus. *“Get rid of Menelaus, then God will help us get rid of Antiochus.”* It is the same now. Get rid of Nicky Gumble, then God will help us get rid of Alan Williams and homosexual bishops and whoever.

It's the collaborator. *“No, get the Romans!”* No, you don't understand. Why are the Romans here? *“You want Me to do what the Maccabees did? How did Antiochus get that kind of power? It is because your fathers sinned; because your forefathers collaborated; because those that knew what was wrong shut up instead of standing up. Now you want Me to get rid of the Romans the way the Maccabees got rid of the Greeks? How did the Romans get here? The same way. They got here because people shut up when they should have stood up -- because people collaborated.”* The Herodians actually collaborated with the Romans. First get rid of Menelaus, first get rid of the Herodians, the Sanhedrin, etc..

It's the Same Today

Well, today it's the same. Jesus began with a small band because that was what the Maccabees did. They began with a small band. Jesus didn't testify against the Romans – everybody knew what they were – He testified against those among His own people who should have known better.

You're telling me that Billy Graham doesn't know it is wrong to lift up the pope of Rome as a great spiritual leader? You're telling me a clergyman from Holy Trinity Brompton doesn't know it's wrong to endorse books by a Druid who ordains homosexuals? Crazy. It's the same, exact thing. They're getting in the same way.

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The stage is being set for the advent of Antichrist. The public reading of the Word of God is going to be outlawed. "It's hate literature." They're saying it in Canada, they're saying it in Sweden, they're going to say it here. And so-called clergy will go along with it.

God's looking for something: He's looking for Maccabees. He's looking for what He's always looked for when things got like this: He's looking for people who realize the enemy is Menelaus. He's looking for people who will take a stand. He's looking for people who will pay a price. He's looking for people who really want to rededicate His house. That's who He's looking for.

It's not going to come from the top; it's going to come from the rank and file. It's not going to come from big groups or big churches; it never did and it never will. It will come from small groups, small fellowships. Expect disappointment, expect hardship, expect betrayal. But Daniel prophesied that in the end they would win and they did. (Dan. 11:45). Revelation prophesies that we will win and so we shall.

"For wicked men to triumph, good men must merely remain silent." It's not Scripture, but the principle certainly seems to be, and so it is.

They're looking for signs, for shows. That's not what's going to make people believe. If that was the case, Britain would have been saved a long time ago. Revival would have come a long time ago. It just doesn't work that way. It works this way – from the heart. This is the way it has to be. If it doesn't go this way, it doesn't go at all.

Who Will Rise Against Menelaus Today?

We are looking for something. We are looking for those who are not afraid to pick up a sword against Menelaus; those who will stand against Evangelicals who go down the Ecumenical road; those who will stand against men like Stephen Sizer who stood on a platform with a Muslim and denounced Israel and called it his Christian ministry. He said nothing about the genocidal extermination of Christians throughout the Muslim world or about our brethren in Christ being killed in every Arab country in the world. No, but he will stand with the Muslims on the same platform in a church, in an Anglican cathedral, and denounce Israel. He is my first enemy, not the Muslim. Steven Weiser is my enemy because he is the enemy of God.

My first enemy is not an Archbishop who will ordain homosexuals. My enemy is Nicky Gumble, a man who will endorse him and lead born-again Christians into reading his books and applauding him.

Sound radical? The Maccabees were radical. They're the only ones who are going to win.

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The temple is defiled. Do you want to be a Maccabee? I can't answer that question for you. What I can tell you is you're going to be rejected. What I can tell you is you're going to be a target.

"Those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many; yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder for many days" (Daniel 11:33).

Those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many. Yet they will fall by the sword until they are refined and purified.

"Some of those who have insight will fall, in order to refine, purge and make them pure until the end time; because it is still to come at the appointed time" (Daniel 11:35).

I can't tell you to join the Maccabees, but I can tell you if you do join the Maccabees, you will have the victory, you will have the blessing. I can tell you if you do join the Maccabees what you should do; I can tell you that. I can tell you all about the Maccabees. I can tell you anything you want to know about the Maccabees probably. But the one thing I can't tell you is if, or not, you really want to be a Maccabee. That's a question you have to answer for yourself.

Me? I stand in *Modi'in*. I throw my lot in with Jehuda, Mathias, Jonathan, Eleazar. I made that decision a long time ago. I don't enjoy being a Maccabee, but some day – **some** day – I know that the temple will be rededicated and once more that lamp is going to burn in God's house.

God bless. ++