

# Your QUESTIONS About Prophecy ANSWERED Part 14

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## A Minor Holiday with a Major Story



It was not too many years ago the mention of “Hanukkah” brought a puzzled look or the question “What’s that?” Most calendars did not even list the holiday. It has been interesting to see the increased recognition of this holiday by the non-Jewish public. Hanukkah cards are found in all of the major chain stores. Even Target carries Hanukkah decorations for those celebrating the holiday.

Why the increase in the popularity of this holiday? Many say as the Christmas gift-giving tradition came to mean getting the newest or hottest toy, the Jewish kids felt left out. So Hanukkah, which falls in the same season of the year, became the gift-giving season in the Jewish home. The cultural experts add that the popularity of the holiday coincides with the increase in emphasizing various cultural traditions in our society.

There may be another reason for the increase in the recognition of this minor, extra-biblical holiday. God may be using the resurgence of interest in this holiday to remind the world of a key event which will happen in the Last Days — the Abomination of Desolation (Matthew 24:15). In fact, this event is so important that the readers of the Gospel are admonished to understand its meaning. *“Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand).” (Matthew 24:15 NKJV).*

*A Minor Holiday with a Major Story continued*

had been desecrated by the vile Antiochus IV who gave himself the title Epiphanes (the visible god).

The amazing fact about this whole story is that 200 years earlier Daniel prophesied with great detail the actions of Antiochus Epiphanes which led to the Temple being defiled. Here are a few examples from this prophecy.

*“And in his place shall arise a vile person, to whom they will not give the honor of royalty; but he shall come in peaceably, and seize the kingdom by intrigue.” (Daniel 11:21 NKJV)*

Antiochus succeeded his brother to the throne of the Seleucid (Syrian) kingdom though the throne rightly belonged to his nephew. He did this by using the contacts he made while chief magistrate in Athens and manipulating events so he could claim the throne.

In an attempt to unify his kingdom he began an intensive program of Hellenization (spreading Greek culture and religion). As part of this program, he demanded to be worshipped and took on the title “Epiphanes” or the visible god.

*“At the appointed time he shall return and go toward the south; but it shall not be like the former or the latter. For ships from Cyprus shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant, and do damage. So he shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant.” (Daniel 11:29-30 NKJV)*

Through military strength Antiochus expanded his kingdom to include Egypt. During the winter of 168 BC, Antiochus along with his army went down into Egypt to quell a revolt.

There he encountered the Roman navy which commanded him to leave Egypt on the authority of the Roman Senate. Antiochus wanted time to think over the request, but the Roman official drew a circle in the sand around Antiochus demanding a decision be made before he could step out. Humiliated he started back home on a route leading through Israel. With a desire to make Israel a buffer between his kingdom and the Romans, he began forcing the Jews to become Hellenized. He was enraged at those who would not forsake their God and His commands. To overcome the opposition he prohibited the observance of the Sabbath, the holidays and circumcision plus he commanded that Torah scrolls be burned.

*“And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation.” (Daniel 11:31 NKJV)*

The ultimate despicable deed of defilement took place on the 25th of Kislev in 168 BC. A statue of Zeus (tradition says it resembled Antiochus) was placed in the Temple and Antiochus commanded pigs be offered on the Altar of Burnt Offering instead of the regular daily sacrifices. The earliest written account of this travesty is found in 1 Maccabees which calls this event “the Abomination of Desolation” (1Macc. 1:54).

Therefore the Abomination of Desolation is not the destruction of the Temple but rather the defilement of the Temple by placing an image of a false god in the sanctuary and sacrificing

unclean animals on its altar.

Three years later under the leadership of the Maccabees, the Temple was taken back and rededicated to the Lord on the 25th of Kislev. Hanukkah (dedication) is the commemoration of that special event in history.

With this understanding, Jesus' words in Matthew 24:15 became clear. The Abomination of Desolation is the defiling of the Temple so it cannot be used to worship Jehovah. This never happened to Herod's (second) Temple. Matthew 24 is referring to a future temple which is defiled by the antichrist as spoken of by Daniel in Daniel 9:27.

For the first time in almost two thousand years we can see the possibility of this prophetic sign being fulfilled. The Jews are back in their own land. Jerusalem came under their control in 1967. While the Temple Mount is not under their control, there is a growing interest in the Temple being rebuilt. (For more information on the rebuilding of the Temple go to our website and click on “Resource Center” and “Free Resources.”)

As the story of Hanukkah is told each year, the Jewish people are reminded of the meaning of the Abomination of Desolation. Now that we understand the story behind the holiday, the Hanukkah holiday or a Hanukkah greeting card should remind us as well of one of the key signs of the times.

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