

John 10:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter.

Analysis

And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter—John provides temporal and geographical context. The "feast of the dedication" is Hanukkah (ἐγκαίνια/enkainia), the Festival of Lights, commemorating the rededication of the temple in 164 BC after Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated it. The Maccabees cleansed the temple, and miraculously, one day's worth of consecrated oil burned for eight days.

The mention of "winter" (χειμῶν/cheimōn) is both chronological (Hanukkah falls in December) and possibly symbolic—spiritual coldness among the religious leaders who should have recognized their Messiah. While they celebrated the temple's past rededication, they rejected the living Temple standing among them (John 2:19-21).

Hanukkah celebrated Jewish resistance to pagan oppression and the restoration of proper worship. The irony: those celebrating deliverance from a tyrant who claimed to be God's representative (Antiochus called himself "Epiphanes"—God manifest) were rejecting the true God manifest in flesh. They honored the past while missing the present fulfillment. The festival of light was occurring while they rejected the Light of the World (John 8:12).

Historical Context

Hanukkah was not commanded in the Torah but became a beloved festival celebrating God's faithfulness during the Maccabean revolt. Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BC) attempted to Hellenize Judea by force, desecrating the temple, banning Torah study, and sacrificing pigs on the altar. Judas Maccabeus led a successful rebellion, recaptured Jerusalem, and rededicated the temple on Kislev 25 (roughly December).

Jesus attending Hanukkah shows He honored Jewish tradition even when not Mosaic law. The feast's themes—true vs. false worship, the temple as God's dwelling, resistance to false authority claiming divine prerogatives—directly parallel Jesus's conflict with the religious establishment. Just as the Maccabees opposed a tyrant who usurped God's place, Jesus opposed religious leaders who blocked people's access to God.

The "winter" setting may suggest this occurs roughly three months before Passover and Jesus's crucifixion (John's narrative moves from Hanukkah in chapter 10 to Passover in chapters 11-12). The Jewish leaders' hostility is escalating toward its climax.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does celebrating God's past faithfulness while rejecting His present work reveal spiritual blindness?
2. In what ways might Christians honor religious tradition while missing Christ's current work among them?
3. What does Jesus's attendance at Hanukkah (a non-Mosaic feast) teach about His relationship to Jewish culture and tradition?

Interlinear Text

Ἐγένετο δὲ τὰ ἑγκαίνια ἐν τοῖς Ἱεροσολύμοις

it was And the feast of the dedication at Jerusalem

G1096

G1161

G3588

G1456

G3588

Jerusalem

G2414

καὶ χειμὼν ἦν

and winter it was

G2532

G5494

G2258

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