

## The Christmas Promise That Lasts Forever

Texts: John 10:22-30

Jude, verses 24, 25

According to our text, our Lord was in Jerusalem at “The Feast of Dedication.” It is more often referred to today as *Chanukah* (pronounced: Hanukkah), which means dedication. This feast celebrated the victory of the Jewish people led by the priestly family of the Maccabees over Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The actual re-dedication took place in 164 B.C. on the 25th day of the Hebrew month of Kislev, which, in our calendar, falls sometime in November or December. The wicked Greek king went into the Temple of God and sacrificed a swine on the altar and commanded that all copies of the Word of God be destroyed. He then ordered the drippings of the pig sacrifice to be spread and splashed throughout the Temple, thus defiling all furniture and amenities of the Temple. Only one flask of oil sealed by the high priest remained undefiled. It was enough for only one day, but according to the miracle of the lights tradition, the oil lasted for eight days in total. Throughout the world the Jewish Chanukah is celebrated in tandem with the Christian Christmas. It is good to remember that Christianity is not a discovery of a new faith; it is the continuation of the same faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

It was in this context that our Lord gives one of the strongest teachings of the doctrine that we call, “The Eternal Security of the Believer.” It was a most amazing event; Jesus walks into the entry of the Temple at Solomon’s Porch and “Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly” (John 10:24). Then our Lord gave one of the clearest answers of His ministry. Jesus explained that He had been doing all these miracles from the very authority of the LORD Jehovah, whom He called His Father! (John 10:25). The unbelieving Jews saw these evidences of who Jesus was, but they did not believe. And why did they not believe? Jesus tells us why in verse 26: “But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.” So at this feast that is celebrated with lights, it is no coincidence that in a previous chapter (John 8:12) Jesus declared, “Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” Then just before our Lord gave the sheep discourse in chapter 10, He said in John 9:5, “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” So why were the unbelieving Jews in John 10 not believing? It was because they were not Christ’s sheep. And why were they not Christ’s sheep? It was because they were rejecting the Light that was Christ. And why were they rejecting the Light? Here’s why: “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). For a fuller understanding, read John 3:14-21.

In our Scripture context of today, the believers are called sheep. And according to the words of Jesus, the sheep will never be lost. God’s sheep are destined for the more abundant life on earth (John 10:10) and a home in Heaven

when this life is over. Proverbs 4:18: "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

This leads us to our subject today: why is the promised salvation of the sheep of God's pasture forever?

### 1. BECAUSE GOD KEEPS HIS WORD

II Peter 1:4a: "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises...."

II Corinthians 1:20: "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." Three times the Scriptures tells us emphatically, that God will not and cannot lie.

Numbers 23:19: "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

Titus 1:2: "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began."

Hebrews 6:18: "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

See John 5:24; John 6:37.

### 2. BECAUSE GOD FINISHES WHAT HE STARTS

Philippians 1:6: "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Ecclesiastes 3:14: "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before Him."

II Corinthians 1:20-22: "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."

Ephesians 4:30: "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

An interesting note: In the original "Feast of Dedication," the only flask of dedicated oil that could be used, because it had not been defiled, was the one remaining flask that had been sealed by the one and only high priest. Here was Christ, the Great High Priest, in the Father's House, commemorating the miracle Oil (The Holy Spirit) that kept the menorah lit in the "Feast of Dedication." Herein is another beautiful metaphor of the Holy Trinity securing our redemption.

There is no power in Heaven or in Earth that can break the seal of The Holy Spirit. We are sealed and we are God's forever.

### 3. BECAUSE GOD'S LOVE IS COVENANTAL AND THEREFORE IMMUTABLE

Our salvation is not secured by one of man's flimsy contracts; it is secured by the covenant love of our Mighty God, Who never changes.

Psalm 89:30-36: "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me."

A beautiful illustration of God's unconditional love is found in Hosea 4:17: "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." But in 11:8 God says, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together."

Isaiah 49:15: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee."

Hebrews 13:5c: "...for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

In Luke 15:12-32, our Lord tells the most touching story of the prodigal son and his elder brother. The prodigal ran away and wasted all his living in decadent behavior until he had none left. The elder brother stayed at home, but his heart was far, far from home. When the prodigal comes home, the father welcomes him back with open arms. And when the elder brother complains of his brother's intimate reception, he rebels. So there were actually two prodigals: the one who ran away from home and the one who stayed at home with a bitter spirit. We see God's response toward the backslidden elder son type was not to kick the son out, but to encourage him to rejoice and be right with God. Two very different sons, but one same and loving Father who shows no favoritism and remains forever the Mighty God Who loves consistently, unconditionally and never varies or changes in His undying love toward His own!

In closing, let us meditate over Romans 8:31-39.

-Pastor Pope-