



# THE EXHORTER'S CALL

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## CHRISTMAS FORGIVENESS

There is no greater gift to mankind than the forgiveness found in and through Jesus Christ. In *Matthew 18:21-22* we find this account of forgiveness: “*Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.*”

There have been many explanations for this saying. Some say that Jesus was just extrapolating to show that forgiveness should not be tracked by any number; some say that no one could conceivably sin against you that many times anyway; while still others say that by the time you've forgiven someone 490 times you're certain to have developed the admirable habit of forgiveness! But what if someone sinned against you 491 times, 492 times, 1000 times? Have they gone past a limit set by Christ?

No, of course not. There is, perhaps, another explanation for Jesus' peculiar answer...

*Daniel 9:24* “**Seventy weeks** are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.”

Those familiar with Bible prophecy know that the “Seventy Weeks of Daniel” encapsulates the history of the Jewish people; from Daniel's time right up to the “end of the time” as we know it. These seventy weeks (70 x 7 days) could very well be what Jesus was referring to when He purposefully answered “*until seventy times seven.*” In other words, as long as there is time upon the earth there is room for loving forgiveness between believers within the body of Christ... and room for forgiveness toward the sinner from Him. However, please notice that Jesus prefaced this figure with the word “until.” This indicates a definite “cut-off” point when further forgiveness will be no longer possible...or even necessary.

*Revelation 10:6-7* “*And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that **there should be time no longer**: But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, **the mystery of God should be finished**, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.*”

Soon, the mystery of God will be finished and time shall be no longer. When an end is made to sin and iniquity, everlasting righteousness will be introduced as God restores all things. When this everlasting righteousness prevails, and we that believe in Christ dwell within glorified bodies, there will be no further transgression. Where there is no transgression, there is no need for forgiveness. It shall come to an end!

This Christmas season; let's reflect on the wonderful gift of God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ. If you are lost in sin, there is still time to seek His forgiveness. If you are already a believer upon the Lord Jesus Christ, there is still time for you to forgive someone else in your life. But hurry....time is running out!



שְׁאֵלוּ שְׁלוֹם יְרוּשָׁלַיִם

Yē-rū-sha-lā'im ←--- Shalom' ←--- Sha-alū



## HANUKKAH

Hanukkah is a Jewish celebration that has its origins in the inter-testamental period of the Maccabean revolt. Circa 168 B.C., “Antiochus Epiphanes” who had proclaimed himself god, commanded that he alone be worshipped, outlawed the study of God’s Word, and forbade the observance of Sabbath, entered and defiled the Jewish temple by sprinkling it with contaminated water, erecting an idol of Jupiter, and slaughtering a pig within its holy walls. Needless to say, this did not set well with Jewish people!

After a successful uprising, the Jews once again took control of the temple and sought to cleanse and purify it according to the prescribed manner of the law. One step in this purification process was to restore the burning light of the menorah. The menorah was a candelabra within the temple that was maintained by the priesthood and commanded by God to remain lit at all times. Unfortunately, there was only one small crucible of holy oil left from the previous destruction and it would take eight days to ceremoniously sanctify more oil in the proper tradition.

The “Miracle of Hanukkah” was that the small crucible of oil lasted eight entire days until more oil became available. Considering the enormous size of the menorah, and the speed in which a small container of oil is consumed, it was considered to be nothing less than divine intervention that kept the menorah light burning day and night.

Both Jews and Christians are familiar with a similar story in 1 Kings 17 where a widow cared for the Prophet Elijah by way of a crucible of oil and a supply of meal that was miraculously perpetuated until the drought and famine ended. The widow and her son were saved by dedicating their supply to the LORD.

Many Jews and Christians are surprised to discover that Hanukkah is mentioned in the New Testament Gospel of John chapter 10, verse 22, and that Jesus was at the temple for its observance, i.e., “the feast of dedication.” The scripture goes so far as to point out that this observance was in the winter to distinguish it from any other biblical feasts. Hanukkah consistently falls mid-December, the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev.

“Hanukkah” is simply Hebrew for “dedication.” As we enter this Holiday season that includes both Jewish and Christian observances of Hanukkah and Christmas, followed by the celebration of a “New Year,” let us be reminded of the marvelous provision God has made for our lives. In the oil we see a type of the Holy Spirit, providing the fuel for the light of God that burns within us. The eighth day has always been considered a type of a “new beginning” since the calendar week ends at seven days and starts over anew.

I believe that the Holy Spirit of God is more than enough to supply all our needs until the time of the “new beginning” and beyond. I pray that the Light of Messiah burns brightly within your earthly temple and that we may all, Jew and Gentile, come to the full knowledge of Yeshua Ha’Meshiach, Jesus Christ.



## Romans 15:13

“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.”

### A SEASON OF HOPE

Joy to the world, the LORD has come, let earth receive her King!

This well-known Christmas carol embodies the message of the entire Bible. Beginning in *Genesis 3:15* God promised that a Deliverer would arise through the seed of a woman and would crush the head of Satan. Simple biology tells us that a woman provides only an egg to the reproductive process, not seed. Right away we are alerted that this is to be no ordinary Deliverer!

Throughout the Old Testament the pattern for Jesus Christ’s virgin birth is outlined: *Isaiah 7:14* “*Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*”

Then in the New Testament we see this wonderful fulfillment: *Matthew 1:20-23* “*But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.*” Is God with you? Why not receive your King?

**Rick Wagon** is a born-again Spirit-filled believer that was saved eternally and securely by the grace of God, through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ. His father was a full-time pastor that raised Rick with a solid foundation of faith, knowledge, and hunger for God’s Word. Rick’s professional background has been in law enforcement, protective security, and anti-terrorism; serving as a supervisor and trainer in these fields. Recently he transitioned to the field of public health preparedness to coordinate disaster response training. He also performs additional duties related to intelligence, security, planning, and logistics. Rick is married to a beautiful, loving wife of faith and blessed with two fine sons that love the Lord. He has served as a church trustee, usher, children’s church teacher, and itinerate guest speaker. Rick believes in living as a bold witness for Christ, loves to worship the Lord, and is available for special speaking engagements in your area.

