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And it was winter

"Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter."

John 10:22

It was winter

The seasons have been alternating since the great flood in the days of Noah. As long as the earth exists, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will not cease (Gen. 8:22). Sometimes this is not a pleasant experience, e.g. when we experience extremely low or very high temperatures. Even in Jerusalem it can be cold in the winter months.

However, the indication "it was winter" in John 10 also has a symbolic meaning. We find in this passage some of the Lord's last conversations with the Jews during the feast of the Dedication of the temple, the so-called Hanukkah feast, which lasted eight days and commemorated the cleansing of the temple – after its desecration by the Syrians – by Judas Maccabeus on 25 Kislev (our month of December) in 165 BC. It was celebrated in the manner of the Feast of Tabernacles, but did not bear the character of a great pilgrimage feast. It became a feast of light, like our Christmas days.

Apparently the Lord Jesus was still in Jerusalem or near the city, although two months had already passed since the Feast of Tabernacles mentioned in chapter 7:2ff. Easter would follow in a few months, and then the Lord would be put to death. Here in John 10, His confrontation with the Jewish leaders was already drawing to a close. Overall, the spiritual climate was chilly and cold. Jerusalem was admittedly buzzing with rumors about Him, and there was division among the Jews

because of His actions and His words. But where was the genuine love and devotion toward Him? Actually, it was only found in Bethany, and that was with Martha, Mary and Lazarus (cf. John 12).

The time had come when the Good Shepherd would lead His own sheep out of the Jewish sheepfold. Having made the sacrifice of His life on the cross of Calvary and taken it up again in the resurrection, a new dispensation would dawn with new principles and new possibilities. A new flock would be formed of sheep (true believers) from the Jews, but also from the nations. It would become one flock, under the leadership of one Shepherd: the risen Lord, the great Shepherd of the sheep (John 10:11-18; Heb. 13:20).

How is our relationship with the Lord? Is there a real bond of love, a warm and fervent love for Him? Or is it perhaps winter in our hearts, is there spiritual aridity and deadliness? Have we become lukewarm and indifferent to the Lord, as happened to the assembly of Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-20)? The Lord is powerful to change this, as it will happen to the Jewish people in the near future. For their adoption will be nothing but life from the dead (Rom. 11:15).

The summer is coming

The Lord Jesus, in His speech about the last things, speaks of the fig tree sprouting and the coming of summer (Matt. 24:32). Do you realize that summer is near, that all things will become new under the reign of Messiah? Winter will then be definitely over. Then the rain (here a picture of judgment) will be over too, the flowers will show themselves in the field, the singing season will have come, and the fig tree – a picture of the Jewish people – will be letting its early fruit swell (Song 2:11-13).

