

The Gospel of John
Lesson #74
The Journey
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The Gospel of John

- We talked last time of how the account of “The Woman Caught in Adultery” is not part of the canon – it probably happened just as described but was not in John’s writings.
- So, as today’s text opens, we need to put ourselves back into the debate Jesus was having with the Scribes and Pharisees as the Feast of Tabernacles moved along.
- It is the next morning after the events of chapter 7 – Jesus is in the temple teaching.

2

The Gospel of John

- John 8:12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”
- Back in John 7:38 we read this – “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”
- The reference he was making with the water had to do with the water God provided from the rock when the Israelites were in their wilderness wanderings.

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The Gospel of John

- Jesus changes the subject from water to light – “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness.”
- First, the reference Jesus is making –
- Isaiah 49:6 And now the Lord says, “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

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The Gospel of John

- “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob” – seems like strange language about Messiah’s mission to save.
- What Isaiah is hearing from God is something like, “to have Messiah only be the Savior of Israel is no where near the scope of the full mission I have for him.”
- And so, God adds, “I will make you as **a light for the nations**, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

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The Gospel of John

- The plan took shape as the years of the O.T. rolled on – in Isaiah’s day it was generally thought Messiah would be a conquering king to deliver (save) Israel.
- Now Isaiah hears that salvation is not just a Jewish thing; it is a human thing – Messiah will be a Jew, he will come at a time when Israel is enslaved and in need of a savior.
- But his mission will be bigger than one nation – the Messiah, though coming as a Jew, is offered as Messiah for all peoples of all times.

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The Gospel of John

- Messiah was prophesied by Isaiah as the “Light for the Nations” – John writes “Light of the World”, but there is no meaningful difference.
- His opponents in the crowd, the Jews, would have known the reference was to Isaiah’s prophecy – therefore it would have been plain Jesus is claiming he is the Messiah.
- The first lesson for the crowd this day in the temple is that Jesus is the promised Messiah – “the Light to the nations” spoken of by Isaiah.

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The Gospel of John

- It would seem that Jesus is making two points around the idea that he is light.
- **Point #1** – Follow this Light and you will not walk in darkness. As a follower of Jesus, you will have supernatural understanding of the scriptures.
- **Point #2** – Follow this light and you will not be a practitioner of sin. As a follower of Jesus, you will have a desire to obey him and what we desire, we do. (mostly)

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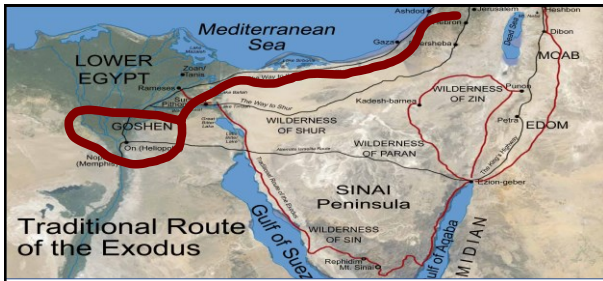
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The Gospel of John

- But there is more to this metaphor of light – remember how God led the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings? (which is what the Feast of Tabernacles commemorates)
- A very visible cloud by day, and a fire by night – another reference the Jews would get.
- Exodus 13:21 And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.

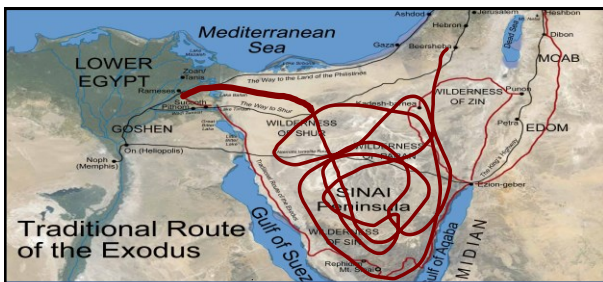
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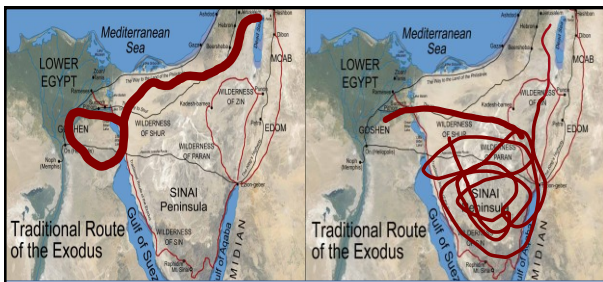
The route above was the shortest route to the Promised Land, but the question is "was it the best route?"

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They were being led by Jesus, yet their long, slow, trek to the Promised Land looked something like this.

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**Which route is better?
Be careful how you judge.**

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The Gospel of John

The presence of Jesus in history goes way back before Bethlehem. At this point in John's gospel, he is referring to himself being the very light that guided their forefathers through the wilderness on their slow walk to the promised land. His claim is that he is light and those who follow him will not walk in darkness. Well, the very presence of the Jews in their land gives evidence that while it may have looked like the Israelites were wandering aimlessly in the desert for forty years, they were very much guided by none other than Jesus himself. Jesus was guiding the Israelites through the wilderness. At first glance their path seems all jumbled. Despite what looks like randomness, their arrival is sure and effective for God's purposes.

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Look at What Happened in the Wilderness

- Bitter water made sweet
- Manna and Quail are provided
- Water from the rock
- Moses hands supported by Aaron & Hur
- Jethro's plan for helping Moses judge the people
- The 10 commandments given
- The golden calf
- Building of the tabernacle
- Miriam's leprosy healed

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Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness.

What is God teaching you in what looks like chaos today?

SALVATION

GLORY

Lessons, Lessons, and more Lessons

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The Gospel of John

- And there is more to this metaphor of light – light is that essence that overwhelms and overcomes the darkness around it.
- A candle in a cave, a small night-lite in your house, or the extra twist on a three-way lamp socket that provides the added light to read fine print.
- Light is soft, though it travels at 186,000 miles per second when it hits you in the face it does not hurt and causes no damage – it is soft, but powerful.

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The Gospel of John

In a sense, we are sent into the world to confront its darkness with the light of Christ – we are to unleash the light within us at 186,000 miles per second and watch it extinguish the darkness around us with a certain gentleness. This is the way we confront the darkness. This is the way we win the culture war. One day at a time, one person at a time. We come boldly against the darkness but gently to those trapped in the darkness. We do not have to improve or add to the light within us, we need only to release it. It is God’s power. Which explains why the genuine witness of the new convert can be just as effective as the witness of the most mature among us.

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The Gospel of John

- Jesus made it plain he was the “Light of the world” and we, by extension as his body today, are framed the same way in Matthew’s gospel.
- Jesus said - Matthew 5:14 **“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.”**
- Philippians 2:15 That you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, **among whom you shine as lights in the world.**

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The Gospel of John

- Paul saw Christians as blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom we are to shine as lights.
- It is easy for us to see today's generation as "crooked and twisted", but Paul is writing around 60 A.D. and saw his generation as he did.
- I wonder if any Christian has ever looked around in their day and said, "my what a godly culture we have" – the darker the day, the easier it is to shine!

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The Gospel of John

- As the lighted cloud in the day and the fire by night led Israel to the promised land, Jesus, as the light, will lead the believer to where God wants him to be.
- And then we read this, "**Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness**" – Like latching on to the taillights of the semi-truck in front of us in fog, just hold fast to Jesus.
- If you want direction in life, grab hold of Jesus and follow him – let his word be a light to your path.

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The Gospel of John

- When I say, "grab hold of Jesus and follow him" I am using a picture that sounds nice, but even though it sounds nice, my statement, while true comes with no instructions.
- How does one grab hold of Jesus and follow him? This is one of those things that really needs no "how to" teaching because if you "want to" you will intuitively know "how to".
- It's like a newborn calf receiving milk from its mother – without ever seeing the process they seem to just know where to find milk and how to receive it.

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The Gospel of John

What does a life that has latched on to Jesus look like?

- It looks satisfied.
- It looks joyful.
- It looks peaceful.
- It looks prayerful.
- It looks watchful.
- It looks contented.
- Afflicted in every way, but not crushed.
- Perplexed, but not driven to despair.
- Persecuted, but not forsaken.
- Struck down, but not destroyed.
- Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

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The Gospel of John

- John 8:13 So the Pharisees said to him, "You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true."
- Now the Pharisees try to turn the conversation to legal arguments – and they have OT law on their side.
- Deuteronomy 19:15 "A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established."

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The Gospel of John

- John 8:14 Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going."
- John 8:15 "You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. 16 Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. 17 In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. 18 I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me."

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The Gospel of John

- In a sense Jesus is saying “yes, by human standards you are right to sight the law, but as Messiah I have the right to call one to the witness stand whom you neither see nor know”.
- The “Jews” were inadequate judges of what Jesus was claiming and their judgment was by no means impartial.
- They had “skin in the game” by virtue of their position in Judaism and Jesus tells them they didn’t know him, they didn’t know where he came from, or where he was going. ²⁵

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The Gospel of John

- In verse #15 we see, “I judge no one”, which seems to contradict John 5:22 (For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son).
- So, if Jesus is the one on the Bema and the Great White Throne why does he say “I judge no one” in chapter 8?
- It’s about the mission – John 3:17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ²⁶

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The Gospel of John

- To reconcile Jesus’ words in chapter 5 that he will judge all, and his words in chapter 8 when he says he will judge none, we need to understand his missions.
- Two comings, two missions – in his incarnation he came to be our sin bearer. In his 2nd coming he is coming as King of kings and as such will be the judge of all.
- So, while his own words seem to be contradictory, they are not so when understood in their context. ²⁷

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The Gospel of John

- Verse #18 “I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.”
- Now Jesus advances the conversation to a place the “Jews” could not abide, he advances from the flesh to the spirit.
- He already told them he was talking above their head when he said they didn’t know him, they didn’t know where he came from, and they didn’t know where he was going – they either didn’t know or didn’t want to know they were talking to God.

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The Gospel of John

Consider the hard-hearted Jew for a moment. In particular the members of the Sanhedrin of Jesus’ day. Messiah is standing in front of them. He is doing miracles in their presence. He is speaking truth to them. Yet, for want of their own will they are determined to remain resistant to all they see and hear. The Holy Spirit will bear witness to them, but they will not be moved to believe that this Jesus can be Messiah. Their minds are made up and their hearts are hardened. Consequently, for the last 2,000 years they have existed with the awareness of what eternity could be like for them now. Instead, every moment is one of pain, darkness, loneliness, and regret knowing their fate is one of their own choosing, and one that will never change.

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Questions?

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