

*The*

**GOD**

We Can Know

EXPLORING THE "I AM" SAYINGS OF JESUS

**LENT BIBLE STUDY**

**7:00 PM**

**FELLOWSHIP HALL & ZOOM**

**MARCH 8, 15, 22, 29 APRIL 5**

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## The God We Can Know

“Let us occupy ourselves entirely in knowing God. The more we know [God] the more we will desire to know [God].”

- Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*

Recap: I AM the Bread of Life: Knowing God's Satisfaction

# I AM the Light of the World: Knowing God's Guidance

When Jesus says "I AM," it means he is accessible for all eternity. Space and time do not limit our ability to encounter Jesus.

John 8:58: "Before Abraham was, I am."

We can encounter eternity in Jesus.

# I AM the Light of the World: Knowing God's Guidance

## Story of the Bible:

- God Gets Everything God Wants
- God Wants to Be Known
- **Moving from Darkness to Light**
  - Genesis 1:2-3: darkness covered the face of the deep until God spoke; first thing created was light
  - Revelation 22:5: new heaven and new earth need no lamp or sun
  - Isaiah 60:1: coming messiah is our light
  - Isaiah 9:2: people who walked in darkness
  - The Bible constantly affirms that **when God comes on the scene, there is light**. God makes darkness a choice.

# Always on a Journey

Jesus went to Jerusalem in the middle of the Feast of Tabernacles festival - celebrated in the fall to commemorate the Hebrews' journey through the wilderness. They lived in temporary shelters - *sukkots* - as they were frequently on the move. So every year, Jewish families build a sukkot and live in it for seven days (today: eat meals in it!)

The practice is a reminder that life is a pilgrimage. The Hebrews hoped in the Promised Land, they would have “arrived” - no more roaming, no more manna and quail, no more sukkots, no more depending on God.

But this world is not our final destination - our journey continues.

What is our Ultimate Destination?

# Always on a Journey

Our Ultimate Destination is to be with God...so it's okay to not fully get "there" or to not be "all there." (ha!)

Life as a journey is liberating - when you find yourself in an unwanted place, you know that place is not the Ultimate Destination but just a stopping point. Stopping points don't have to become staying places.

What stopping points or staying places have you found in your lives?

# Always on a Journey

*Sheol* - Jewish underworld. It means “place of darkness.” In a really dark place you don’t see the future - you forget life is a journey.

“Ain’t it gonna be wonderful to see how the Lord works through this?”

How do you know stopping places aren’t staying places?

Hebrews knew by two pillars: cloud by day and fire by night. They knew it was time to move when the pillars move - they were following God. But no pillars in Promised Land! So God gives them the Feast of Tabernacles to remind them they need God’s guidance - it is God who keeps stopping places from becoming staying places.

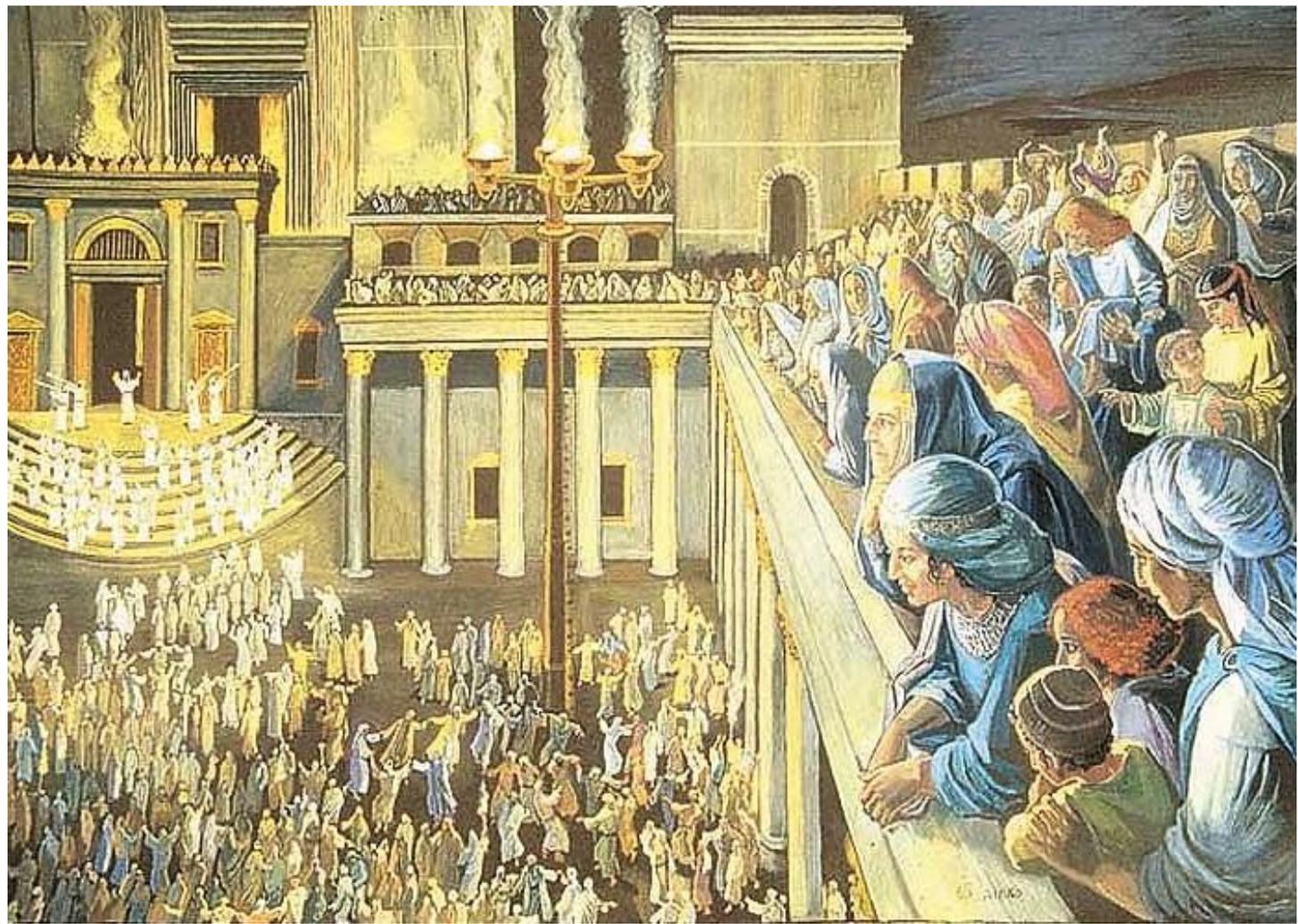
# Always on a Journey

Feast of Tabernacles: Grand Illumination night. Giant torches lining the courtyard of the temple burned so brightly that all of Jerusalem was illuminated. People sing and dance until the morning light - a huge celebration. THAT is the context of John 8:12.

How do you think his listeners understood what he said?

“For those who understand life is a journey, for those who seek light and direction in stopping places, I will be your pillar.”

What kind of light is Jesus? Candle or flashlight or overhead light or sunlight?



## Always on a Journey

Flashlight faith: shows you the next few steps but not the destination.

This can be frustrating for those who want to know where our steps take us! But if life is a journey, then Christ determines “there.” Christ is “there.”

It takes a lot of steps in the wilderness to reach the Promised Land. But remember “I will be there howsoever I will be there.”

**We need God more than the courage we want from God.**

When have you had a flashlight faith moment?

## Feast of Tabernacles...and Sanhedrin?

John 7: not only is it the festival, but the Sanhedrin were meeting in the Hall of Hewn Stones. They gathered daily to consider religious affairs except a) on the sabbath and b) **during festivals.**

### **So why were they meeting?**

John 7:45-52

How did darkness work here? Who was in a dark place?

Who spoke up for Jesus?

## Feast of Tabernacles...and Sanhedrin?

Nicodemus...who first came to Jesus in darkness (John 3)

One of the most courageous movements in the spiritual life - the willingness to be open to a new idea, a new revelation. To say that something you once held sacred, something that was very important, might not be right.

Sanhedrin meeting happening while Jesus was outside saying “I AM the Light of the World.”

## Feast of Tabernacles...and Sanhedrin?

When we let Jesus be our light, he exposes what needs to change or be brought to newer understanding. Letting that happen takes courage.

Window cleaning story



## The Courage to Change

The year was 1978. Rev. Kelvin Croom was a senior at the University of Alabama. His father approached him and said Wallace, then in his third term as governor, wanted to meet with them and other black leaders at the Stafford Hotel. The Rev. Kelvin Croom was with his father when Wallace asked for forgiveness.

The young Croom paused. "It caused me to really think." He thought about the hate he'd seen on TV spewing from the governor's mouth. "I say segregation today, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever," the governor notoriously said as he was sworn into office in 1963

## The Courage to Change

Kelvin Croom decided to go with his father. "And I'm glad I did," he said. The rumors in the black community, Croom says, had been that Wallace was on a forgiveness tour to get the black vote.

But Croom says he saw it differently in person. "He said he was wrong," Croom says. "He asked for forgiveness. It was up to us to do that once he asked. It's just so amazing. He played the great politics of the day - and by using hate and racial divide he won."

Yet when they met privately that day at the hotel, Croom says

## The Courage to Change

Yet when they met privately that day at the hotel, Croom says, "This man was really concerned for his soul and his relationship with Jesus Christ."

An assassin's bullet left him paralyzed, from the waist down, in excruciating and constant pain for the rest of his life. He became a born-again Christian. George Wallace's son says that that his suffering helped him understand others' suffering.

## The Courage to Change

In 1979 Wallace made an unannounced, unpublicized trip to the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, the church where Martin Luther King Jr. had served as a pastor. Mr. Wallace told the congregation: “I have learned what suffering means. In a way that was impossible [before]. I think I can understand something of the pain black people have come to endure. I know I contributed to that pain and I can only ask for your forgiveness.”

## The Courage to Change

In his final term as governor (1983-87), Wallace did even more than that. He appointed a record number of African-Americans to state offices and dramatically increased the number of African-Americans registered to vote. The Tuskegee Institute awarded him an honorary degree. The Rev. Joseph Lowery of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, one of the organizers of the civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965, then invited Governor Wallace to an event to mark the march's 30th anniversary in 1995. Pastor Lowery told the frail former segregationist: "You are a different George Wallace today. We both serve a God who can make the desert bloom. We ask God's blessing on you."

# The Light of the World

Sometimes the journey through the wilderness is a difficult one. But if we refuse to let stopping places become staying places, darkness can be turned to light.

Sometimes our paths are cloudy, and sometimes we choose the darkness - it's a result of our own actions. But we are not beyond grace.

When have you felt that God gave you choice over some kind of darkness?

# The Light of the World

## **John 3:16-17**

Nicodemus - comes full circle:

+approaches Jesus at night

+stands up for Jesus in a meeting

+provides burial spices to anoint Jesus' body...in the light of day

How have you experienced Jesus as a source of light in a time of darkness? What does it mean for us to be the light of the world?