

# THE PILLAR OF CLOUD AND FIRE

Ex.13 : 21-22

Westend Bible Chapel

Nov.13'2022

***“By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.”*** –  
(Ex. 13:21-22)

From the Exodus to the conquest of Canaan, the pillar of cloud was the leading factor in the lives of the Israelites.

- It led them to Sinai
- It was present when Israel put themselves under Law.
- Present when the Israelites worshipped the golden calf.
- Present when the stones of the 10cc were broken by Moses
- Present during the building and completion of the Tabernacle

Ex. 40:34 –“ ***The cloud covered the tabernacle of the meeting , and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.***”

What was this pillar of cloud associated with God’s people ?

## **The Cloud Was the Visible Emblem of God’s Presence**

Well , it wasn’t a common cloud, but a supernatural, mysterious cloud. It was the visible expression of the invisible GOD. The Angel of God was in the cloud . The cloud veiled His majestic, overwhelming glory. He was in it. He spoke and did His work through it.

To us, the cloud is also a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The cloud was a gracious gift to the Israelites, after their deliverance from Egypt , and so the Holy Spirit is a gift to those who have been delivered from their sins.

When we received Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior , John the apostle tells us that the Holy Spirit , come down to live in us and be with us forever. By the Holy Spirit, who is invisible, the Lord manifests Himself in and through us , His church, during our pilgrimage in this present age (Jn. 14:16-17). He speaks and works through us as the hidden God in the cloud.

In the daytime the cloud was a covering , stretching over the entire camp , to screen them from the heat. At nighttime it became a pillar of fire, to give them light. They were never in darkness because of God's abiding presence. Day and night the cloud never left them. For 40 years the glory of the Lord shone over them.

We'll never be in darkness. The Holy Spirit's abiding presence in us , is our light! No matter what we go through –illness or financial difficulties , broken relationships, or dreams , knowing that God's presence is with us , makes all the difference in the world .

Deut. 31:8 –“ ***The LORD, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you; He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed.***”

But there is much more to understand concerning by the pillar of cloud.

### **The Cloud Was the Constant and Infallible Guide of Israel**

Deut. 1:32-33 –“ ***The Lord your God, who went ahead of you on your journey, in fire by night and in a cloud by day, to search out places for you to camp and to show you the way you should go.***”

The cloud guided the Israelites throughout the struggles of their long journey 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Today, in the same way the Holy Spirit within us , guides us and leads toward our heavenly destination .

In Jn. 16:13, Jesus tells us, ***“When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth.”***

Associated with the movement of the cloud there was the word from God as commanded by Moses . God led them by external means , today God leads us by the internal impulses and striving of the Holy Spirit and by the external means of the written word, the Bible.

Numbers 9:17-23, clearly reveals that when the cloud would lift and go forth , all Israel would dismantle theirs tents, pack up, and with all their belongings, herds and flocks would march and follow the cloud.

Israel lived on standby , never knowing when the trumpet call to march would be heard when the cloud moved . The Christian is to live on standby , by that I mean , to be synchronized with the guidance of the Spirit for our movements.

We must stay pace with the Spirit of God . Christians have brought upon themselves unnecessary hardships and often pain , simply by choosing not to wait for the leading of the Spirit . They have rushed ahead and made moves according to their own fleshly whims and wishes. Other Christians , because they are not in tune with the Spirit’s leading , when He wants them to move forward , they stay put , losing out on benefits of greater joy and peace in the Lord .

Three times we are told in Numbers 9, that at the Lord’s command the Israelites set out , and at His command they encamped .God’s guidance demands our obedience whether it makes sense to us or not. To move too fast brings us back into the heat of the trails and in a sense darkness and confusion . If move we do not move , we also find ourselves out of the shelter of God’s guidance and rule .

Gal.6:25— ***Since we walk by the Spirit , let us keep in step with the Spirit.***

George Muller, as one of the greatest men of prayer: God orders both, our steps, and our stops. Ps. 107:7—***He led them forth by the right way.*** It is perhaps the unexpected way, or even the shortest way , but with God in the lead , whether the way is long or short , bumpy, or not, it is the right way.

## **The Cloud Was the Mighty Defense of Israel**

The presence of the pillar of cloud also meant God was on their side and their protection.

Exodus 14:19-20—***“Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel’s army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them,<sup>20</sup> coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so, neither went near the other all night long.”***

At the shores of Red Sea, the cloud changed position, and it came between the Israelites and the Egyptians. The pillar stood behind Israel , to protect them all night , until they safely crossed to the other side of the Red Sea. It was darkness for the armies of Egypt and light for the Israelites .

The Holy Spirit , like the cloud, is our rear guard . He takes our past and hides it from us. He separates us from our past life in Egypt. With the Holy Spirit , the old life and the new are parted . He separates those who are in darkness with those in the light .

What a blessing it is to have the Holy Spirit between us and our troubles, between us and our enemies, between us and our past. To have Him above us , in us , before us , behind us and all around us is blessing beyond comprehension. God is our protector and defender. Psalm 62:6 –***He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be moved.***

The pillar of cloud to the Christian is also a type of Christ Himself. God veiled in flesh. God was veiled in the cloud. The coming of Christ to the

Cross was the coming of the pillar of God between us and our great enemy sin. He came between, that He might overcome the Devil, and save all those that are on the believing side .

### **The Cloud Descended to Fill and Rest on The Tabernacle**

Ex. 40: 34-35—“ ***Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.***”

The nations around the Children of God ,had sacred places and buildings, but they were empty. Only the Tabernacle was consecrated and blessed to have the glorious divine presence of the God of all glory. We all know how the Shekinah glory of God shone forth from the Holy of Holies. The Lord dwelt there, over the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant. That’s where the cloud stood and rested.

The New Testament tabernacle/temple is the individual believer (1 Cor. 6:19) and God’s presence and glory is in the church (1 Cor. 3:16 & Eph.3:21). Christians are the only beings in which the Holy Spirit dwells . How privileged we are among all creation, angels included. Only Christians possess uncreated life .

***The Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you*** (1 Pet. 4:14). Romans 8:14—***only those who are led by the spirit of God are the sons of God .*** To be led by the Spirit , one must possess the Spirit . Rom.8:9—***if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ , he does not belong to Christ.***

### **The Cloud Departed When the Wanderings of Israel Were Over**

*After Israel entered the Promised Land , all the external manifestations of God's presence disappeared, and the vision that came to Joshua in front of Jericho — the Son of God with a drawn sword in His hand — became from*

*that day onward a pledge of the same presence, protection, and power (A. B. Simpson).*

From that time on, the external sign was withdrawn, and their Leader ( the Angel of the Lord ) was to be with them by faith and not by sight.

It is the same for us, when we come into the fullness of Christ, we have fewer signs, we have less of the wonderful and spectacular; but we have more of the working of faith and power. We must learn to trust the Holy Spirit, even when we cannot perceive the signs of His presence. We have the Word and the permanency of indwelling Spirit, who needs signs. Signs are for unbelievers.

### **The Cloud of God's Glory Will Supernaturally Reappear One Day**

The cloud shall once more descend upon and dwell among Israel. When God re-gathers His scattered people , the Jews , in the Millennium , and brings them to a saving knowledge of their Messiah-Redeemer, at His return , then shall be fulfilled the ancient promise found in Is. 4:2-6 (NIV) —

***“In that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the Fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel.....Then the LORD will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over all, the glory will be a canopy. <sup>6</sup> It will be a shelter and shade from the heat of the day, and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain.”***

That cloud of glory will be the heavenly Jerusalem , the eternal dwelling place of church , which comes down from God , as a canopy of protection over the earthly Jerusalem. Redeemed Israel will be overshadowed by the glorious splendor of the tabernacle above her. The city shall have no need of sun or moon to shine in it , for the glory of God illuminates it and the Lamb is its light .