



Exodus 13:21-22

The Pillar of Fire

"The Lord was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people" (Exodus 13:21-22).

The fire in the pillar of the cloud was the same as that in which the Lord revealed Himself to Moses out of the bush, and afterwards descended upon Sinai amidst thunder and lightening in a thick cloud. It was a symbol of the "zeal of the Lord." This sign of the presence of God did not depart from Israel so long as the people continued in the wilderness.

The cloud symbolized God's presence.

The cloud of glory guided the people of Israel during their wilderness experience. It changed from a cloud by day to a pillar of fire at night.

This was no ordinary cloud in the sky. Its origin was supernatural. By day it appeared as a dark cloud in contrast with the light of the sun, however at night it was a fiery splendor.

However, when it stood still above the tabernacle, or came down upon it, it must have been the most awesome scene of glory.

We find examples of the LORD guiding and protecting the people with the cloud in Exodus 14:13-25. "The angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them. So it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud along with the darkness, yet it gave light at night. Thus the one did not come near the other all night" (14:19-20). When the cloud moved, the people followed it. When it stopped, everybody stopped. In the night time the cloud was a great column of brilliant light, and all night long the radiance from that cloud brightly illuminated the entire camp so that no night ever touched them for forty years. As soon as the sun rose, the fire became a white cloud.

When this cloud went before the army of Israel, it assumed the form of a column; so that by day it resembled a dark column of smoke rising up towards heaven, and by night a column of fire, to show the whole army what direction to take. You can imagine the horror that such a sight struck in the heart of the enemies. If an enemy was pursuing them that cloud moved around, got in between them, and turned a hot, fiery face to the adversary. If it were daytime, the cloud turned a dark impenetrable darkness over them.

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The cloud of glory hovered over the Tabernacle in Exodus 40:34-38. The Tabernacle in the wilderness was God's dwelling place on the earth among His people. When Israel entered the Promised Land the cloud became the *Shekinah* on the Ark of the Covenant and the Temple. In Solomon's Temple the cloud symbolized the LORD's presence (2 Chronicles 7:1-3).

The prophets spoke of the light that radiated from the cloud (Isaiah 60:1, 19; 9:2; Psalm 27:1).

"The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them" (Isaiah 9:2).

"Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you" (Isaiah 60:1). "No longer will you have the sun for light by day, nor for brightness will the moon give you light; but you will have the Lord for an everlasting light, and your God for your glory" (Isaiah 60:19).

The ancient rabbis said, "Light is the name of the Messiah."

The Light of the world has come.

The closing of the first day of the Feast of the Tabernacles had arrived and Jesus was teaching in the Temple in the Court of the Women. Four great candelabra, with four great golden bowls of oil, were prepared for the celebration. As the evening approached a great crowd of people arrived for the lighting of the candelabra. When darkness fell four youths of priestly lineage climbed on ladders and lit the great torches. There was such a blaze of light that suddenly the darkness was pierced with such a light that it is said to have illuminated every street and square in the city of Jerusalem. The light could be seen for miles around Jerusalem. It is in this very court, at possibly the very moment of the lighting that Jesus cried out: "I am the light of the world." In effect, Jesus was saying, "You have seen the blaze of the Temple illumination piercing the darkness of the night. I am the Light of the world. The light in the Temple is a brilliant light, but in the end it flickers and dies. I am the Light that lasts forever." He declared, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life" (John 8:12).

Jesus is the light of the world. He in person is that light. Jesus and no one else beside him is the light. It is only in the person of Jesus Christ the attributes of God shine forth radiantly in the world.

The I AM formula

The people who were listening to Jesus knew that He was referring to the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day that had guided their forefathers. They called to mind the *Shekinah* glory in the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple. It was a reminder of the glory of God, dwelling among His people. Jesus used the "I AM" formula of Exodus 3:12 and John 8:56-59. It was a supreme claim to Deity and the Messiah. Campbell

formula of Exodus 3:12 and John 8:56-59. It was a supreme claim to Deity and the Messiah. Campbell Morgan said, "These are the words of the most impudent blasphemer that ever spoke, or the words of God incarnate."

Jesus gives sight to the blind.

Just before healing the blind man Jesus said, "While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world" (John 9:5). Later Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me. He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me. I have come *as* Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness" (John 12:44-46).

The word "light" is a metaphor for spiritual illumination. When Jesus claimed to be the Light, He was claiming to be the possessor and bearer of the divine truth of salvation. He is the final and complete revelation of God to man. In Him, we find divine instruction. He was claiming to be the only one who gives everlasting salvation. He is the active light that conquers all spiritual darkness.

The Apostle John saw Jesus as the Light. "In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (John 1:4-5). John the Baptizer "came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but *he came* to testify about the Light. There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man" (vv. 7-9).

Jesus Christ promised spiritual life to all who will believe in His light. He promises that we will "not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." No one could make that promise but God. He illuminates the spirit and soul of men who are in a state of spiritual blindness. He brings conviction by the light He gives. The light of the Lord Jesus Christ reveals our spiritual darkness and spiritual blindness.

Jesus said, "He who follows Me," i.e., trusts and obeys Him receives spiritual life. As the Light of the world Jesus must be followed like the pillar of fire in the desert. When we follow Jesus we enter into a permanent spiritual relationship with Him. The Apostle John testified to this fact: "This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and *yet* walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:5-7).

When we receive Jesus as the Light He comes into our lives and makes available to us a life that radiates from the life in communion with Him. We are the light of the world because of our intimate love relationship with Him. He gives a radiated light. Jesus told His disciples: "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Mathew 5:14-16). You can not live the Christian life without the inner light that He gives the believer. He is our source of spiritual light. Our witness is a reflected light that comes from Christ. We give Him our darkness and He gives us His light. He is the Light that ignites the oil of the Spirit in our lives.

The bright and morning Star

If that were not enough to light our soul and set it on fire, there is a day coming when we will look at the heavenly city all bathed in the translucent light of the glory of the Lamb of God. "I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon

the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 21:22-27).

That is not all. John went on to describe the New Heaven: "And there will no longer be *any* night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever" (22:5). Indeed He is the "bright and morning star" (v. 16).

Have you come to the Light and experienced His saving grace? To those who sit in darkness of unbelief and impurity He is holiness. You can come out of spiritual darkness right now by putting your trust in the Light.

If you need help in becoming a Christian here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

Title: Exodus 13:21-22 The Pillar of Fire

Series: Christ in the Old Testament

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