

# **“The Pillar of Cloud and Fire”**

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A little while ago we were talking about God’s glory that appeared to Moses in the bush, and how we may see that glory everywhere, for the whole earth is full of it. The same glory appeared in the cloud by which God led the children of Israel when Pharaoh sent them away after the tenth plague, for

“In the daytime also He led them with a cloud,  
And all the night with a light of fire.”

At this time the Israelites did not know much about the Lord. We can tell by what they said to Aaron a little while after, “Make us gods to go before us,” that they expected to be led by something that they could see.

The false gods, of which the land of Egypt was full, could be seen and handled, and the people had not yet learned to see the true God, like Moses, who we are told “endured as seeing Him who is invisible.”

You know that “invisible” means unseen, and perhaps you are wondering how it is possible to see the unseen. Yet the Word of God tells us that “the invisible things of Him, since the creation of the world are clearly seen.” And then we are told how this can be; they are “understood by the things that are made.” “His eternal power and godhead” are the “invisible things” that can be “clearly seen” in His works.

God wanted first of all to teach His people to know Him, so that they might trust Him fully, and follow wherever He led them. How do you learn to know a person? Is it not by seeing what he does? By watching a person’s actions, you learn to know him. And so God shows us His works, that we may learn His ways. “He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the Children of Israel.”

When they started out from Egypt, the Israelites had not learned to see God in His works, so He did special works in their midst, to teach them and to open their eyes, so that they might be able to see Him doing the same works everywhere. And the first thing that He showed them was His power and glory in the cloud.

Have you thought that the pillar of cloud and fire was only to lead the Israelites, and show them the right way to go? It was much more than that; it was to open their eyes to see that “the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork.” It was God drawing near to show them “the power of His works,” to teach them to lift up their eyes on high, “and behold who hath created these things.”

This would have saved them from the sin of worshipping other gods, or of making images to represent the true God. For those who see the power of God in His works, and His glory reflected as in a mirror or looking-glass from all the things that he has made, will never be so foolish as to try to make an image of Him.

All their lives long, in the clouds that floated over their heads in Egypt, just as in those which we see in the sky to-day, His "eternal power and godhead"- were to be seen. Did they ever think—do you ever think—of the mighty power that drew up those immense masses of water from the earth, balanced them in the sky, and "turned them round about by His guidance," pouring them out in showers to water the thirsty earth and give drink to all His creatures?

But this did not make them know God; for at that time they were "defiled with the idols of Egypt." God had told them to cast all these away, and He who "stretcheth the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in," now "spread a cloud for a covering" over His people. He brought His works nearer to them, that they might learn what He was doing for them always.

In the hot, dry, sandy desert, the cool shade and moisture of the overshadowing cloud must have been most refreshing to the weary travellers during the heat of the day. And at night, when the sun had set, and the air grew chilly, "the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud," and lightened their darkness, warmed and cheered them and protected them from the dangers which were around them on every hand.

Would you not like to see such a grand and glorious sight—the glory of the Lord appearing in the cloud? Then lift up your eyes on high when the setting sun paints the clouds with every lovely shade of rose and amber, and gilds them with glory. or again when the drops of water that form the mist break up the sun's rays into the seven-hued rainbow,—God's bow which He has set in the cloud.

Here you may see the same glory that the children of Israel saw, for remember that "the heavens declare the glory of God," because He has set His glory upon them, that in reflecting it they may give light and warmth and beauty and fruitfulness to this world.

God was in the cloud that led the Children of Israel, and so His glory shone forth from it. But "He maketh the clouds His chariots," and His glory appears in every one of them.

So just as His appearing in the bush showed that He was dwelling there and in every plant that grows on earth, His coming to the Israelites and showing them His glory in the cloud showed that He is dwelling also in the heavens, and it is His glory which shines forth from them.

It was Jesus Christ who led the people in the pillar of fire and cloud, and all that it did for them was to show what He is, and what He is doing for all. It showed them the way. Jesus says, "I am the Way." It gave them light by night, and shade by day. Jesus is "the Light of the world," and "the Lord God is a sun and shield." He is "a shadow from the heat."