



PREACH THE  
**WORD**  
It's Still All About  
**Jesus**

# Pillar of Cloud & Fire

Ex 13:21-22, 40:34-38 Psalm 46 Mt 10:24-33

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In *theology*, when God appears on earth in Old Testament times, it is called a **Theophany**. The word *theophany* means a “*God appearance*”. Specifically, it is the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, who appears on earth before His birth in Bethlehem<sup>1</sup>. In a *theophany*, the Lord is intervening on behalf of His People. He is **saving** them, **helping** them, **guiding** them, or **protecting** them.

Today we heard about an *interesting theophany* in our Old Testament reading. At times in Israel’s early history, God appeared as a “*Pillar of Cloud by Day and a Pillar of Fire by Night.*”

The first appearance of God as a *Pillar of Cloud by Day and a Pillar of Fire by Night* is in the Exodus story. The Israelites had escaped Egypt, and they were traveling through the desert. Pharaoh changed his mind about letting them go, and so he sent his army to chase after them. The Israelites were trapped along the Red Sea; the Egyptian army was closing in behind them and the Red Sea was in front of them. Moses didn’t know what to do with the 602,000 men – not counting their families -- that he was leading out of Egypt.

So, God intervened. He opened up the Red Sea for the Israelites to walk on dry ground; and He stood between the Israelites and the Egyptians

<sup>1</sup> The Son of God is the “speaking God” – the *logos* – The “Word” of God who interacts with His People to save them. *Theophanies* are the *pre-incarnate* Son at work on behalf of His People. God the Father is never seen, only heard, as at Jesus’ Baptism and Transfiguration; and God the Holy Spirit is only seen in the form of a dove at Jesus’ Baptism; and tongues of fire at Pentecost. But the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, interacts with His People to save them! In the Old Testament, those times are called “theophanies”.

as a *Pillar of Cloud by Day and a Pillar of Fire by Night*. The Lord saved His people once again! In this *theophany*, the Lord defended His people from danger; and protected them from evil. That night every single Israelite crossed the Red Sea safely, on dry ground. That same night, every single Egyptian who chased after them was drowned in the Red Sea.

This *theophany* story foreshadows what the Lord Jesus does for us. He stands **between** us and danger; He saves us, defends us, and protects us. The *danger* for us comes in many forms.

- ⇒ **The danger of temptation.** Satan and the world are continually tempting you to sin. They slowly chip away at you until you give in, and you trip and fall into rebellion or immorality. So the Son of God stands between you and the temptation.... He took your place under every temptation, but He Himself never did sin; He never gave in to the temptation. **He now helps you and gives you His strength and His Spirit to help you resist temptation.**
- ⇒ **The danger of guilt.** A guilty conscience is a very dangerous thing. You break a commandment and your conscience accuses you of sinning against God and against others. A guilty conscience can easily drive you into destructive behaviors; and at worse: drive you away from the One True God. So Jesus stands between you and your guilt; He takes it upon Himself and removes it from you. **By His death on the cross, Jesus suffers with your guilt and gives you a clear conscience and peace with God.**
- ⇒ **The danger of God's wrath.** Our sins are serious; and they bring God's full wrath, anger, condemnation, and judgment against them. So like the *Pillar of Cloud by Day and a Pillar of Fire*

by Night, Jesus stands between you and God's wrath. On the cross, the full force of God's terrible wrath fell on Jesus, so it would never fall you. **In Christ, you are delivered from the wrath of God, and you receive only grace and mercy from God!**

⇒ **The danger of death.** Death is another danger that we cannot escape on our own. We all deserve to die and be cast in hell because of our sin. Like the *Pillar of Cloud by Day and a Pillar of Fire by Night*, Jesus stands between you and death; He died in your place; and in His resurrection, you are given life; eternal life! In Christ, **physical death cannot interrupt eternal life that Christ has given to you!**

We will never see the *Pillar of Cloud by Day and a Pillar of Fire by Night*, but the same God who is in the *cloud* and the *fire* is now at work in our lives to defend us from danger and to protect us from evil. **It's our Savior Jesus Christ**, the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity → and He stands between us and **temptation, guilt, wrath**, and **death!**

In the Old Testament one of the key things that God did in the *theophany* of the *Pillar of Cloud by Day and a Pillar of Fire by Night* was to **lead** the Israelites to the promised land.

And the LORD went before the Israelites 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. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people. Exodus 13:21-22

God was **present** with His People and **led** them. The same God – the Lord Jesus – is **present** with you and **leads** you through life. Your life is not guided by chance, luck, or destiny. In fact, there is no such thing as chance, luck, or destiny. Your life is **guided** by the Lord Jesus --- He is at

work for good in our lives, and He promises that your life has a purpose and a plan. The Lord Jesus is like our “**UNSEEN**” *Pillar of Cloud by Day and a Pillar of Fire by Night*. He is **present** and at work in your life – even through the difficult and unexplainable times – He is at work to **lead** you safely to your home in Heaven. *God is with you and leading you!*

One other thing about the *Pillar of Cloud by Day and a Pillar of Fire by Night*. It was a **visible sign** of God's Presence among the Israelites. God was there, leading, guiding, and protecting them.

We also have a **visible sign** of God's Presence among us as a congregation. It's Holy Communion. Holy Communion is even better than the *Pillar of Cloud by Day and a Pillar of Fire by Night* because the Lord Jesus is present among us to forgive our sins. Christ gives us His body and blood in the visible and earthly elements of bread and wine. They don't look like much --- but Jesus has promised that that is where He is to be found! In bread and wine we find the Savior of the World, the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity! And He is in bread and wine to forgive our sins! Holy Communion is like the *Pillar of Cloud by Day and a Pillar of Fire by Night* -- **but even better** – because God is present to forgive our sins!

God appeared to the Israelites in a spectacular, powerful way as the *Pillar of Cloud by Day and a Pillar of Fire by Night*. He **saved** them, **helped** them, **guided** them, and **protected** them. The same God that was in the *cloud* and the *fire* is with you: the Lord Jesus – and He **saves** you, **helps** you, **guides** you, **protects** you – and **forgives** you! **Amen!**