



**A**ND it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: <sup>18</sup> But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt. <sup>19</sup> And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you. <sup>20</sup> And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. <sup>21</sup> And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: <sup>22</sup> He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people. (Exodus 13:17-22)

The Bible mentions several different pillars. There was the 'pillar of salt' into which Lot's wife was turned in her disobedience in taking a longing look back at her wicked city of Sodom (like many other sinners who look back at the dog's vomit); the two pillars of the Temple of Dagon which Samson pulled down and killed many thousands at once; the two pillars of the Temple of Solomon called Jachin and Boaz; and the Pillar of Fire by Night and Cloud by Day of the Lord's Providence to the Children of Israel in their coming out of Egypt into the Wilderness.

The Pillars of the Temple of the false god (Dagon) were strong in supporting three thousand men on the roof, and covering thousands more in the temple beneath; but only ONE God-inspired man (Samson) was God's instrument in pulling that temple down around their necks and killing all inside, and all above on the roof. The owner of any Pillar will determine its value. If the Pillar is of God, nothing can stand against it.

The wife of Lot, coveting her possessions left behind in the wicked city of Sodom was transformed into a Pillar of Salt when she looked behind her against the counsel of the angels that led her away from the ruination. She became a Pillar of Infamy for valuing ill-gotten possessions more than life itself.

The Pillars of the Temple of Solomon which he built for the Lord are Jachin and Boaz. These stood at the entrance to uphold all Holy worship and ritual of the people to their true and Almighty God – the Father of Lights, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father of all who are of the Elect in Christ.

The pillars mentioned are worthy of note for both their strength (Solomon's Temple), or for the illustration of the fallacy and foolishness of man's imagination (the Pillar of Salt and the Pillars of the Temple of Dagon). But the Pillar to which I wish to direct our concentration today is that Mighty Pillar of the Lord which both led and followed the Children out of bondage, and for forty years, in the Wilderness journey. The description of that Pillar appeals to our imagination in understanding the power and beauty of our Lord God.

Note principle text above that tells us God led the Children of Israel by the longer route to the Red Sea by means of His Pillar of Fire by Night, and Pillar of Cloud by Day. He leads always when we hear His Voice and follow without fail. The route may not seem the best, but we trust Him. God makes the way forward; but He does not neglect the Rear Guard either. As Pharaoh's mighty army drew near against those trapped against the waters of the Sea, and was impinging to destroy them all, we read of this providential intercession of the Mighty Lord: <sup>19</sup> *And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them.*<sup>20</sup> *And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them,(the Egyptians),but it gave light by night to these(Israel): so that the one came not near the other all the night.* (Exodus 14:19-20)

**LESSON:** The Word of the Lord is darkness to the wicked, but Light unto all who believe! God will always stand between His chosen and the enemy.

God is an avenger against the wicked: *That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.* (1 Thes 4:6) He is also a consuming fire against those who would trespass on the righteousness of God: *For our God is a consuming fire.* (Hebrews 12:29), and, *Understand therefore this day, that the LORD thy God is he which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the LORD hath said unto thee.* (Deuteronomy 9:3) The Lord epitomizes the quality of a great leader. He goes before His armies in breasting the enemy strongholds. When we study God's Word, we become very familiar with His character, and we KNOW that He will never forsake nor leave us – see Hebrews 13:5. Just as we learn to trust, by and by, a lifelong friend, our Lord is a Friend who sticks closer than a brother. He not only walks right beside on the Road to Emmaus, but both leads our advance, and follows our rear echelon.

See how the Lord wages our battles even in the depths of the Sea. As the Children of Israel reached the far shore of the Red Sea, Pharaoh's army was in hot pursuit. *And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, And took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians.* (Exodus 14:24-25) This makes me happy that I served in the US Army and not that of Pharaoh! The all-seeing eye of the Lord looked out from the Pillar of Fire and of the Cloud, and the LOOK was enough. Divers today have taken convincing photos of evidence of many chariot wheels in advanced decomposition on the bed of the Red Sea. That fire is the Power of God, and the Cloud received our Lord at His Ascension – remember? Our God is the God of Fire and Cloud!

The Mighty Pillar of God led, and followed, the children of Israel throughout their Wilderness journey, but it stopped at the crossing of Jordan Banks. Command was given by God in all that they should do after crossing. They disobeyed in many particulars in the days, months and years that followed. When the presence of God is

not near to us, we lose our way and direction. That is why our Lord came to redeem us, and why He sent the Comforter to be our Pillar of Fire by Night and Cloud by Day to both lead, defend, and follow us in the Way.

One of the men of valor that survived the forty years episode was not allowed to cross into the Promised Land. It was the man least suspected of failing that privilege – Moses! Moses was anointed by God to lead the children in the way and as an example of Godly character. But Moses failed at the great Rock of Mt. Horeb (the Mountain of Mercy). <sup>8</sup> *Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink.* <sup>9</sup> *And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him.* <sup>10</sup> *And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?* <sup>11</sup> *And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.* <sup>12</sup> *And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.* (Numbers 20:8-12) Moses took credit and did not ascribe to God.

God led Moses up the heights of Nebo to view the Promised Land from afar, but took him home there as well and buried Moses in the Valley of Moab where no man knew. It is doubtful that anything recognizable remains of Moses in that grave, but it matters not. Our God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Moses did not enter that paltry land beyond Jordan banks which was a type and symbol of a far brighter Promised Land; however, we do see Moses again in Scripture.

His appearance should allay any doubts concerning our bliss and joy beyond our own grave in the desolate Valley of Moab! Should we not be overjoyed to know that it is not our souls that shall remain in that grave? <sup>1</sup> *And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,* <sup>2</sup> *And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.* <sup>3</sup> *And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.* <sup>4</sup> *Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.* <sup>5</sup> *While he yet spake, **behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud,** which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.* <sup>6</sup> *And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.* Ah, yes, the CLOUD. It just keeps reappearing in biblical teaching. And, Moses, also. He did not go to the that ground beyond Jordan, but He did go to another Mountain, didn't he – the Mount of Transfiguration to be with, and talk with, Christ! Good old Elijah (Elias) was there as well. We have here the full Old Testament revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (Elijah). Perhaps that same Glory Cloud on the Mount of Transfiguration is the same which received our Lord at His Ascension? *And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*

Anyone game for a little Cloud-Watching?