



01-11-19

The Light of Men
Pt. 2, In the Wilderness

Happy Friday, and welcome back to our theme for the month: The Light of Men. Our theme is taken from John's introduction to his Gospel. John 1:1-4 reads,

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 **In him was life; and the life was the light of men.***

The word "life" here in v 4 is from the Greek word pronounced *dzo-ay'*. In contrast to *bios*, which connotes biological life, *dzo-ay'* connotes that timeless spiritual *life* or essence, that is perhaps the most fundamental description of our Creator God. Jesus explained, *God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth* (John 4:24). Essentially then, this word *dzo-ay* connotes the Godhead's Divine essence of spiritual **self existence**, just as He asserted before Moses in Exodus 3:14: *I am who I am*.

John also explains that the Godhead's spiritual *life* (which was and is manifested by the Word) was the *light of men*. The word translated "light" connotes luminousness, in the sense of making something seen or manifest. In short, the essence of God was manifested in the God-Man Jesus, and suddenly our sin-darkened and hopeless world had spiritual light! Jesus was and is, *...the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world* (John 1:8).

Truly, Jesus was and IS the Light of the World, and as John testified, Jesus has been revealed to *every man*! Paul in Romans 1 makes it clear: no human is born an atheist! And the Word's revelation to mankind is not only spiritual (i.e., testifying to our consciences that we are more than just an animal, that we are eternal, and that we are accountable to our Creator) but it is also physical! And it is this physical manifestation of God's glory that we are highlighting in this month's theme.

Last week we highlighted the Light or Glory of the Creator being manifested to the primordial creation on Day 1 of Creation Week. Creator Jesus cried out, *Let there be light...*, and Moses records, *...and there was light*. And this was 3 days before Jesus created the Sun and the stars, which are our Universe's source of physical light. The primordial, water-covered earth, and the expanse of space-time was suddenly filled with the Glory of God. The Hebrews called God's glory "Shekinah".

This week we will highlight another manifestation of God's glorious light, which was used to protect and guide a liberated nation of ex-slaves as they encamped along side the Red Sea. God revealed His Presence in a pillar of shining cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Moses records this testimony in Exodus 13:20-22.

And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. 21 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: 22 He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

Truly, Jesus IS the LIGHT OF MEN, and in this case His glory was used to comfort, lead... and PROTECT His people. The pillar protected in two ways. First, generally: for the entire 40-year sojourn in the wilderness the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night never departed from the camp, and later from above the Tabernacle. Can you imagine what effect this had on all the bands of raiders and pillagers that would have gladly preyed upon outskirts of the camp? I'm thinking that this supernatural, and no doubt awesome manifestation, would have unnerved many a reprobate robber. So, first, the pillars protected generally. And second, specifically: this week we want to focus in on a specific instance where God used the pillar to curse and thwart Israel's enemy and at the same time bless and light his people's pathway! The event was the Red Sea crossing. The miraculous story is recounted in Exodus 14. Here is the Cliff Notes version...

God knew Pharaoh's wicked heart, and since Pharaoh would not glorify the Creator by bowing before Him in repentance, then God would be glorified and honored in and through Pharaoh's self-destruction. We read in Exodus 14:1-4,

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2 Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea. 3 For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in. 4 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. And they did so.

God purposefully led the nation into what any military strategist would describe as a death trap, in order to lure proud Pharaoh to his demise! God instructed Moses to march the nation right up against the shore of the Red Sea, and there they encamped. We read about Pharaoh's reaction in Exodus 14:4-9.

5 And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us? 6 And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him: 7 And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them. 8 And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand. 9 But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pihahiroth, before Baalzephon.

When Israel saw the dust cloud approaching, and then realized it was the Egyptian army, they panicked. But Moses rebuked them and cried out,

Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. 14 The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace (Exodus 14:13, 14).

And then a miracle upon a miracle happened. As Moses prepared to obediently stretch out his rod over the waters and watch God part a sea, the already miraculous pillar of cloud moved from before the nation, to behind the nation, placing Himself between the hard-riding Egyptian army and the frightened ex-slaves.

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: 20 And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night (Exodus 14:19, 20).

That *angel of God* was none other than a Theophany of the LORD Jesus Christ. To Christ's enemies (in this case, the Egyptians) He was a cloud of foreboding darkness, but to the Israelites Jesus was a glorious physical light that illuminated their entire nighttime crossing of that dried seabed. What an experience that would have been! The waters were a wall on either side, the seabed was rock-hard and dry, and every step was illuminated by a supernatural illumination: the Shekinah glory of Christ!

This historical, physical event paints a lucid picture of how Christ will resist the proud but assist and succor the contrite and humble. Jesus the Cornerstone warned the proud, impenitent leadership of His own nation,

...What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? 18 Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder (Luke 20:17-19; also Matthew 21:43-45).

If we proudly persist in our rejection of the grace of God (manifested in the sin-sacrifice performed by Jesus with His own blood) we will, just like those ancient Egyptians, bring upon ourselves, *...a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour*

the adversaries (Hebrews 10:27). A proud, self-righteous refusal to bow before King Jesus in humble contrition, will force Jesus to move that pillar of cloud between your sin and His grace, and like the Egyptians you will find it to be a dark, fearful, and eternal mistake!

God bless and consider!