

Deuteronomy 31:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of a cloud: and the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle.

Analysis

And the LORD appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of a cloud—the visible manifestation of God's presence, the same glory-cloud that led Israel through the wilderness (Exodus 13:21-22), descended at Sinai (Exodus 19:9), and filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-38). **And the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle**—positioning God's presence at the entrance emphasized He was initiating this encounter, guarding access, and authorizing what followed.

This theophany authenticated Joshua's commissioning as divine, not merely Moses's personal preference. The visible cloud assured both Moses and Joshua—and Israel watching—that Yahweh Himself orchestrated this leadership transition. The cloud's presence recalled God's faithfulness throughout the wilderness journey, encouraging Joshua that the same God who led through Moses would lead through him. Christ's transfiguration similarly manifested God's glory-cloud and divine voice authenticating Jesus's identity and mission (Matthew 17:5).

Historical Context

Occurred circa 1406 BC at the tabernacle on the plains of Moab. The pillar of cloud/fire had been Israel's constant companion for forty years—leading during marches, signaling when to camp, manifesting God's presence. This appearance paralleled earlier manifestations at critical moments (Exodus 33:9, Numbers 12:5), always accompanying divine communication or judgment. After Solomon's temple

construction, God's glory similarly filled the building (1 Kings 8:10-11), though the cloud departed before Babylonian destruction (Ezekiel 10:18-19), returning eschatologically in Christ.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. Why does God sometimes manifest His presence visibly (cloud, fire, Christ incarnate) versus remaining invisible?
2. How did the familiar cloud comfort Israel during this leadership transition? What continuities did it represent?
3. Where do Christians encounter God's manifest presence today, and how does this authenticate and encourage ministry?

Interlinear Text

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| וַיֵּצֵא ד | הָעֶנָן | עַמ וּד | הָאֹהֶל: | יְהוָה ה | וַיֵּרָא |
| stood | of a cloud | and the pillar | in the tabernacle | And the LORD | appeared |
| H5975 | H6051 | H5982 | H168 | H3068 | H7200 |
| הָאֹהֶל: | פָּ תַח | עַל | הָעֶנָן | עַמ וּד | |
| in the tabernacle | over the door | H5921 | of a cloud | and the pillar | |
| H168 | H6607 | | H6051 | H5982 | |