

# The Pillar

by Henry Law

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*Christ's guidance is available to His people through His Word, the Holy Spirit, and Providence, leading them safely to their destination.*

**Scripture:** Exodus 13:21, Psalm 119:105, Isaiah 4:5, Isaiah 30:21, John 8:12

**Topics:** "Divine Guidance", "Christ Our Shepherd"

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## Description

Henry Law preaches on the journey of the children of Israel through the desert, guided by the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night, symbolizing Christ's constant guidance in our lives. Just as the Israelites had to trust in the pillar for direction in the wilderness, believers are reminded that Christ is the unchanging and ever-present guide in their pilgrimage towards heaven. The pillar's unwavering presence and protection in the face of storms and trials reflect the unshakeable strength and reliability of Jesus as our Savior and Shepherd.

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## Transcript

"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." Exodus 13:21

The children of Israel are about to tread an unknown path. A desert is before them, wide and desolate and trackless. They have no chart to show the way. There are no friendly lips to counsel or to warn. They must proceed, and yet they fear to stir.

This is a common need. Perhaps you, who read, discern your very case. You have left Egypt. The hated bonds are burst. But Canaan's rest is far away. An intervening wilderness extends. Hence the sigh rises in your breast, Oh! that some guide were near! How can the distant end be safely reached?

Israel's story gives the glad reply. Were they allowed to wander without beckoning support? Oh, no! Whose hand, then, waved them forward? Did the Lord send some natives of the wilderness to teach where the paths were safe? No! Did He inspire their ruler's mind with instinct of the untrodden land? No! He comes Himself. He stoops to take the office of their guide. But by what method is His directing aid made clear? A visible form, which every eye might see, reveals the wondrous guide. A pillar descends, and rests upon the camp. When the day shines, it is a cloudy column. When darkness comes, its mass is fire. Its presence never is withdrawn. It moves, a signal for advance. It rests, to bid them pause. Such is the protection and guidance of the desert-march.

Do you now ask, what is the Gospel significance of this type? The type distinctly shows that no believer ever moves unled. The prophet proves this, when he selects this emblem to portray Christ's care--'Then the Lord will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over all the glory will be a canopy.' The conclusion, then, is sound. The Pillar preaches Christ, the preceding Shepherd of His flock. Faith gazes on it, and drinks in the comfort of an ever-leading, never-leaving God.

Reader! come now, and seek some comfort for your pilgrim-days, from Israel's Pillar. Especial circumstances marked it. It was but one. In midday brightness, and in night's deep gloom, the substance was the same. Thus Christ is ever one. He who was shadowed out in Eden; He to whom Abel looked; He who was Abraham's seed and David's offspring and the sweet theme of every prophet's harp; He who was pierced on Calvary and laid in the grave; is the same Jesus who shall shortly come again.

No sinner escapes death, but through one victim, one righteousness, one faith, one hope, one clinging to one cross, one cleaving to one Lord, one journeying in one blood-stained path. There is one only Savior of all the saved, one only door of heaven, one only plea before the judgment-seat, one only ransom of a guilty soul. If Israel had turned to other guidance, they would have rushed to sure destruction.

Reader! deluded men, with Cain-like pride, frame other saviors, and find no Savior. Take heed. Look only to the one Christ, and to the one Bible, and to the true church. He is not divided. Do not be divided from Him.

The Pillar ever rose in firm solidity. Cloudy masses bend quickly before a driving breath of wind. The storm beats on them, and they vanish. But this Pillar mocked the lash of hurricanes and watery floods. Amid the roar of elements, it smiled unmoved, immovable. It was quiet, as a rock among unquiet waves. Thus no assaults can shake salvation's Pillar. Satan has done his worst. Each weapon which hell can point has been hurled at Him. The might and craft of man have marshaled all their forces. But every shaft of shrewdness, ridicule, and wit; the strong man's strength, the great man's greatness, the prince's power, and all plotting wiles; have fallen baffled at His feet. Reader! you can have confidence in your Guide's strength. The heavens may crumble into dust. But He cannot be shaken.

But the Pillar, though firm and solid, yet changed its appearance. In day its look was dark. In night it shone in brilliant blaze. It put on the fittest garb to gain observance. Here is the tender grace of Jesus! Mark His unwearied efforts to draw minds towards Himself. It is with this design that every Bible-page proclaims some feature of His saving truth. For this, heaven-born, heaven-taught, heaven-sent heralds in pulpits and by dying-beds, in public teaching and in private converse, call and beseech men to behold Him, as the only way of life. What more can Jesus do to cause His mercy to be fully seen?

Reader! if your eyes turns elsewhere, the blame is not with the conspicuous Pillar. When night's mantle wrapped the earth, the Pillar clad itself in robes of fire. It shone, that all might see. It shone, that all in seeing might rejoice. Such is the love of Jesus. When is His presence most clear, most cheering? Surely in the dark hour of need. When gloom oppresses, when mists of horror rise, when prospects blacken, when the beclouded eye discerns no safety and no peace in earth, then the smile of Jesus gives light. Unusual glories then illumine the road.

The Pillar had an upraised arm. Its ascending spire directed to the skies. So Jesus calls us to an upward flight. How solemnly He warns to rise above the mire and filth of a soul-murdering world! How faithfully He tells that all its baits are poison, its touch pollution, and its wages death! How tenderly He cries--Come

unto Me, and leave such vanities below--lean on My arm, and climb the hill of peace--mount by My side, and I will bring you to a reconciled Father's throne, and the high mansions of your God! Thus Jesus points to the heavens. Reader! be wise. To look to Jesus is to soar to heaven.

Such were its peculiar properties. But its main purpose was to lead. When it preceded, the willing host advanced. When it stood still, their camps were fixed. They were not called to reason, or to ask, or doubt. All who wish to go or tarry submitted to the ruling column. Their guide was God. His will was love. His way was knowledge. His end was safety. Nothing was left for them, but to observe and follow.

Shall twilight types outshine the Gospel sun? It cannot be. The heirs of grace are cared for, as truly now as then. Their Leader is the same. Be it so, that Christ directs not now by visible display of manifested presence. Be it so, that the eye of nature sees not a moving or a halting pillar. Still faith can trace an unseen hand, and the enlightened mind can read the warnings of a heavenly Lord. Christ guides now by His Word. The Book of books is always by our side. It is a present and a perfect chart. The upward path, the downward slopes, the hidden snares, the plains of safety, the meadows of repose, are all here pencilled with inspired skill. This is the blessed handbook of the blessed route. The humble pilgrim meekly prays, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.' The answer carries not--'This is the way, walk in it. Is it not pledged, 'When you go, it shall lead you; when you sleep, it shall keep you; and when you awake, it shall talk with you; for the commandment is a lamp and the law is light.' The believer's daily walk attests the truth. When perils have been near, and pitfalls have gaped, and by-ways have enticed the steps, a beacon from the Word has warned and saved.

Reader! would you reach Canaan? Then cling to this ever-living guide. Search it day and night. Make it your chosen friend of every hour. Engraft it by prayer into the soul of every thought. Let it direct the helm of each desire. Think, as it thinks--speak, as it speaks--move, as it beckons--rest, as it counsels. Your steps will then be safe and pure. For the light of Scripture is the light of life. It is Christ's hand, Christ's heart. What was Israel's Pillar to our open Bible's page?

But Jesus multiplies His guiding help. He also extends the hand of Providence. He moves the ever-moving wheels of circumstances. No sparrow falls, no leaf decays, but in accordance with His ordering mind. He wills, and things occur. Chance is a figment of a dreaming pillow. It never was. It never can be. Thus to the child of God there is no trifle or unimportant event. Momentous issues often hang on rapid words, on sudden looks, on unintended steps. It is so, because the Lord's direction plans and overrules life's every concern.

Hear Eleazar's grateful witness, 'I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren.' When Joseph's brethren thirsted for his blood, who caused the pit to be unoccupied with water? Who brought the Ishmaelites to bear him into Egypt? Who gave the sleepless night to Persia's King? Who brought the aged Simeon, the pious Anna, at the exact moment, to the temple? Who led Onesimus to hear Paul's saving words at Rome?

But perhaps some mind may sometimes ask--Is this event the leading of my Lord? There are sure rules. No opening is safe which contradicts the Word. Christ's voice abroad, at home, without, within, is always one. It calls to seek God's glory, to promote redemption's kingdom, to conquer self, to tread down sloth, to flee the world's applause and lusts, to lift the standard of the cross, and to march boldly in the path of righteousness. If the path leaves these lines, avoid it. Christ leads not here. Some foe misleads.

But Christ is a Pillar with more than skill to guide. There is a virtue in Him to open eyes, that they may see--to quicken feet, that they may follow--to tear reluctance from reluctant hearts. All this He effects by His almighty Spirit. Without such light, the Bible-page is a dark chaos, and wheels of Providence an intricate confusion. Sin has benumbed right sense in souls. Sin has brought blindness on the inner man. But Jesus speaks. The Spirit heals. Sight is restored. A new creation lives--and new-born powers perceive and love and tread the heavenly road.

The Pillar had power to screen. It is written, 'He spread a cloud for a covering.' The scorching rays of the sandy desert were thus warded from the journeying host. Reader! I trust that you well know the cool retreat and sheltering covert of a Savior's wings. The pilgrim's day is often long and hot, and darts of Satan burn with fiery sting. How soon the heart would faint, how soon the worn-out strength would fail, unless our Pillar cast a grateful shade. It is still true, 'The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night.'

The Pillar never failed. Provoking sins abounded. Ungrateful murmurs sent forth hateful sound. But still no wrath withdrew the guidance. It only vanished when Jordan's stream was reached. Here is the boundless grace of Jesus. If severe iniquity could quench His love, who would not long ago have mourned His absence, and found life to be a starless night? But no! He loves, and lovingly He guides unto the end. The Pillar leaves not until the full blaze of heaven breaks forth. Like Bethlehem's star, it brings to the very place where Jesus is. The beacon shines until the haven is attained. Christ leads to where Christ reigns.

Reader! whom do you follow? Think, Oh! think, whom do you follow? There are hell-ward leaders--not a few. There are downward ways, alas!--too many.

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