

IN CHRIST

A Place to Live

Part One: The History of the Cloud

Preface

Many of us who are born again have a doctrinal understanding of “our position in Christ”. It is a mystical, spiritual, hidden away place in the heavenly realms where, “I guess I must be because God says that I am”. It means absolutely nothing to many of us while we are alive on the earth “today”. This booklet is dedicated to encouraging the saints to experientially know this place called “IN CHRIST”. The “Cloud” we will be talking about represents God seeking a relationship with man. The specific relationship that God’s heart wants is for man to be able to live in Him so that He can live in man. We will see that “in Christ” is more than a position, it is a relationship.

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord
Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all
spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”
Ephesians 1:3*

*“For God has allowed us to know the secret
of His plan, and it is this: He purposed long
ago in His sovereign will that all human
history should be consummated in Christ,
that everything that exists in heaven or
earth should find its perfection and
fulfillment in Him”
Ephesians 1:9-11*

Introduction

“According as He hath chosen us IN HIM before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4a).

“Having made known to unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself” (Ephesians 1:9). “Being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will” (Ephesians 1:11b).

Let's begin with the Eternal Godhead before time and before creation. From the foundations of the world the Eternal God's council was to find a way to tabernacle by His very Being and Presence in man. The Godhead's council was brought forth from Their desire to create a realm in which They could dwell and be at home in. At this point we might want to interject that this is God Who is Spirit, Who is so vast that Solomon declared the heaven, neither the heaven of heavens could contain Him (II Chron. 6:18). This Eternal and ever existent Being that is God was desiring to inhabit His own creation. What an awesome thought. Before creation and man even came into existence, an incredible plan was conceived in God Himself to make a way for God to tabernacle in man! (“According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world.”) As we shall later see, the essence of this plan will be found in a place called “in Christ.”

Now let's look forward a little bit into time as we continue looking at the earth's history. We will move forward to the time of Moses. Much has been done at this point. A universe has been flung into existence, and all things in the creation of the earth have been set in order. Adam and Eve have been created and Noah has heard God's voice and been obedient. Abraham and his offspring, the Israelites, have separated themselves unto the Lord for His purposes in the earth. But although all this has occurred, this Eternal God has not yet moved forth into this temporal realm in His actual Presence in a such a way that would be to make His home among them and eventually in them.

To sum up this initial thought we will state that Eternity Himself had not yet stepped outside of His eternal abode and moved forward into the realm of the temporal. God had not yet taken actual steps in the person of His Presence to tabernacle among men. So next we will take a closer look at the first experience Eternity has when He lands on planet Earth.

God's Cloud

(Heaven Comes Down... The Eternal Meets the Temporal)

It should be quite interesting to see what happens when the Eternal Presence of God meets the temporal earth! Let me clarify this point. Certainly at this time God has already had many contacts with earth and with some of the men on it. He had spoken to man, and He had visited this realm in what the scriptures call “the angel of the Lord”, to name just a few. But none of these “encounters” signify God Who is Spirit seeking to find a home and resting place on planet Earth. These experiences were more like someone coming to visit than someone moving in. God is about to land on earth in a manner that is more like moving in than visiting. We are about to hear of a close encounter of the God kind!

“Oh My! Mount Sinai!”

“The Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai. Take heed to yourselves, that you go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it. Whosoever toucheth the mount shall surely be put to death. There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through;” (Exodus 19:11-13).

Let’s enter back into the history of man again at the time when Moses is preparing the people of Israel to meet the living God in Exodus chapter 19. This must have been an exciting time for the people of Israel! The Lord Himself is going to come down in the sight of all of them right on nearby Mount Sinai (v.11). Strangely enough, though, there seems to be an element of fearful preparation for this coming event. They hear stern instructions from Moses to not go anywhere near the mount or else horrible things will happen. What could explain such a phenomenon as they were about to witness? And why should Moses and everyone be so careful and fearful in preparing to meet the Lord Who saved them and led them out of Egypt?

In an attempt to make a clear explanation of that last question, let us divert for a moment to contemplate on a certain thought. When a foreign object enters into your system, your whole body convulses to vomit it out. When two opposing forces meet there can be a violent reaction. When cold air and hot air come together a storm manifests. Well, when the very Presence of the Eternal God Himself actually landed on the earth... the heavens thundered and the earth quaked and all that came near died. The life of the Eternal God is so foreign and “other” to the realm of this world that for Him to even enter into it brought forth the response of two totally opposite forces meeting with the power of an electrical storm in a battle field. Here we have a powerful picture of what it would be like to “experience the living God” outside of knowing Him in Christ! When God’s Eternal Presence in the cloud came to touch down in this earth on Mount Sinai, the reaction was so violent that nothing could even come near to this landing strip Mount and still live. To get stuck in the middle of heaven touching earth would kill you. It is pretty evident that at this time God had no place here. Although God created this world, He is not of it (Jn. 1: 10-11).

God’s Presence of Life is not welcome in this world’s atmosphere of death. We see here on Mount Sinai a picture of what an awesome thing it is that one day a union would actually happen where God would not only be able to move upon man, but actually be

able to live within Him. We can begin to see here at Sinai that we cannot even touch the living God and live, much less become the place that He inhabits. There must be another Mount that we can come to wherein we can dwell in God and He can dwell in us. This spiritual mount is in Christ, for only through, in and by Christ could a union between heaven and earth exist. But we are jumping way ahead now! Let's return to Mount Sinai in our present discussion.

Back to our Cloud. For the moment His only place of residence was on top of Mount Sinai. This was probably not a very comfortable resting spot for the Lord, yet He had to land somewhere! This was only the beginning of this Glory Cloud's journey, and we shall see where He ultimately ends up!

That Cloud consisting of God Who is Spirit and from above just decided to stay put on Mount Sinai for awhile. It was probably a bit lonely up there, but He did find a friend, and that was Moses. Moses was the first mortal to feel comfortable in God's atmosphere. Somehow Moses was able to enter into the Atmosphere of the Cloud and find a precious relationship of face to face communion with the Lord. A similar phenomenon would occur many years after this time when David found immediate access into the Presence of God in the tabernacle named Zion. But Moses was the first temporal being that Eternity's Cloud felt comfortable hanging out with. The God of the universe is stuck on top of this little mountain waiting to find a home and the only one who comes to visit Him is Moses. Maybe now you can begin to understand why God called Moses His friend.

It must have been a strange time for the children of Israel. God was looking kind of far away and angry over there on Mount Sinai, and yet every time Moses came back from being with Him His face is glowing and he isn't shot through with arrows and stoned. The whole thing must have seemed crazy and confusing to the people in the wilderness. And so when Moses goes on an extended forty day vacation into realms far above the camp, the children of Israel down below start to play, and Moses' brother Aaron even plays with them (Ex. 32).

During Moses' time communing on Mount Sinai, the Lord shares many precious realities with him. He shows Moses the True Tabernacle and gives him the pattern for building. He also shares His Law to be brought down to the people. When Moses comes back from forty days and nights immersed into and sustained by God's own Being; the shock that Moses' system must have experienced when saw the people dancing around the golden calf probably felt a bit like the Cloud did when He first landed on Sinai! The contrast was too much for Moses and the first thing that Eternity's Cloud gave to man in the hands of his friend broke into pieces. Even so, the desire in God's heart to find a home in us was not broken. Moses had seen God's face and knew that this union would one day come forth through God's eternal wisdom and mercy in His Son.

“I Want to Live in His Presence”

“And Moses took the tent and pitched it outside the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the

tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass that everyone who sought the Lord went out unto this tent that was pitched outside the camp” (Exodus 33:7).

After this little stunt with the golden calf, the Lord made a comment something like *“I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiff-necked people, lest I consume thee in the way” (Ex. 33:3)*. Well, as soon as Moses heard that, he packed up His tent and moved it outside the camp. Moses did not want to live in the atmosphere of the earth, he wanted to dwell in the Presence of the Lord all the days of his life. If God said that He wasn't going to dwell in the midst of the camp, then Moses was going to move his tent outside the camp as an open invitation for God to find a place in his tent. And so, God's Cloud looked over from its landing strip on Mount Sinai, and for the first time saw a location that looked a little bit like home. The place where God felt at home was Moses' tent otherwise known as the Tabernacle of Meeting. Anyone who wanted to get to know the Living God moved on over to spend time at Moses' tent just because the very Presence of God Himself was there. There was one other man in particular named Joshua who loved the Presence of God and never wanted to leave (v.11). But, Moses loved to worship the Lord by becoming swallowed up of Him in the Eternal Atmosphere of His Life. This was a shadow of the relationship man would have with God one day known as being found in Christ and Christ being found in us. It was more important to Moses that his home be found in God's Presence outside the camp, than finding his life in the earth with the rest of the people.

Here Comes That Cloud Again!

“And it came pass, as Moses entered into the tent, the cloudy pillar descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses” (Exodus 33:9).

How inviting it must have been when that Cloud looked over and saw His friend Moses waiting for Him outside of the camp. Here was a man who wanted to dwell in the living God. The Cloud slowly and majestically began to descend and stand at the entrance of Moses' tent. This was the first time the Cloud found refuge in the tent of a mortal. This is the true essence of worship, that Christ might be able to inhabit us as we choose to find our life in Him. And that is just what Moses did, he worshipped God by communing in Oneness. In Moses' tent God felt at home. This is what it means when we say that God wants to tabernacle in man, He wants us to come into such a relationship with Himself that we feel at home in Him and He feels at home in us.

When God came by the pillar of the Cloud into Moses' tent, the rest of the children of Israel just stood in the doors of their individual tents and worshipped from afar as they watched this incredible relationship between God and Moses (v.10). These people were experiencing an Old Covenant relationship with God. But since Jesus has died and rose again, we can experience a New Covenant relationship with God through Christ. We no longer have to worship from afar because *“now in Christ Jesus we who once were far off are now made near by the blood of Christ” (Eph. 2:13)*. The beautiful relationship God the Father has with His Son is no longer something we just watch from a distance or learn

about in a book. God has put us in Christ so that we can become swallowed up of the eternal relationship between the Father and His Son. *“And this is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son” (I Jn. 5:11). “And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ.” (I Jn. 1:3).* We are no longer outsiders or aliens, but fellow-citizens who now belong to the household of God.

This relationship Moses had with the Presence of God speaks of someone who wants to live in the Atmosphere of God Who is Spirit, of someone who wants to be swallowed up of the place that is God Himself. Moses was hidden in Christ so that he could commune with God. Moses did not feel at home in the camp with the rest of the people, He felt at home where ever the Presence of the Lord was, whether that be on Mount Sinai or in the Tabernacle of Meeting. He wanted his life to be hidden inside of God’s Life. Moses did not want to be seen but to be swallowed up of the One by Whom all things consist. This was how Moses worshipped, and yet it was not something that Moses did, but the place where Moses chose to dwell and find his life. What a beautiful picture of someone abiding in Christ. This is not to be understood as an emotional state, or someone feeling the Presence of God in a strong manifest way. I believe that Moses’ was saying that He wanted to be found in Christ, not having His own life of emotions and feelings and works and thoughts, but to become hid in and filled with God’s life in the place where God is found dwelling. We now understand that the place where God’s life is found is in Christ.

Nowhere Else but In Him

“And so it was, when the cloud abode from evening unto the morning, and that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed; whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed” (Numbers 9:21).

Moses’ inward determination was to know nothing save the all-encompassing reality of God in such a manner that could only be found within the Lord Himself. Wherever the living God was, that was the only place Moses wanted to be. This heart condition made Moses the perfect leader for Israel, for this was God’s desire also.

“Whether it were two days, or a month, or a year that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, the children of Israel would remain in their tents, but when it was taken up they journeyed” (v.22). To Moses, it was not a matter of what location they were at in the wilderness or how long they had been there. The one all - encompassing and preminent factor was simply if God was yet among them. Moses cried out to the Lord in Exodus 33:15, *“If Thy Presence go not with me, carry us not up from here!”* This was more important to Moses than deliverance from Egypt, defeating the enemy, or finishing this wilderness journey. If we could but understand the heart that says, *“Lord, You alone are my deliverance, my victory, and my land of promise”*, then we would quickly find ourselves leaving the realm of defeat and wanting to find the Lord in His place above it all. Moses knew God wanted to find a home in men. As long as the Cloud seemed happy

to find rest over the Tabernacle, then there was no need to move or do anything else, for they were fulfilling their purpose.

Life was not meant to find it's purpose in winning battles, accomplishing tasks, or even being a good Christian through all of our daily situations. Life was meant to only be found in Christ. We can know this quality of life when we make the decision, like Moses did, to only abide where the Lord abides. If our life is found only where His life is found, then you will choose to set your affections on things above rather than things on the earth (Col. 3:2). Our walk will therefore become ordered by where the Spirit is and when the Spirit is moving rather than our own religious agendas and efforts. In Christ we will live and move and have our being! If we have been born of the Spirit, then we should also choose to walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25). Herein we are not referring to the Holy Spirit who teaches us Christ, but the Spirit of Life found in Christ Jesus.

The quality of life you will find in Christ will make you realize that you never really knew what Life was before abiding in Him. All shadows flee away and all temporal issues lose their motivational power as you dwell in the light of His eternal fullness. Moses knew this for he had found the Lord in this way. You too will automatically come to these conclusions if you really do know the Lord this way. **THIS PLACE IN CHRIST IS BEAUTIFUL!** It is all fullness. It is ever-green, ever-blossoming with life, completely stable and unmoved by anything in heaven or earth. It is the land that flows with milk and honey. It's river flows from the Source of an endless life. This place is in the Father's Son in Whom He is always well pleased. If you find these descriptions marvelous, how about crying out for the Holy Spirit to actually open the eyes of your heart so you can see for yourself?

“It's Too Ethereal For Me!”

Some might consider at this point that a spiritual location such as “in Christ” seems to be too impractical or “spooky”. Consider this: with the efforts of many men in Israel to get the children of Israel out of their wilderness situation, only the men who lived from above were able to get the job done. First, you've got Joshua leading the group, a man who spent most of his time hanging out in the Presence of the Lord. Then you have Caleb who, with Joshua, were “of another spirit”. Over and over again, throughout all the history of God's people, it was those who knew the Lord from above that were able to have the vision and the correct spirit and nature (because of dwelling in Him) to bring forth any real change down here. Someone has to come down with life from the realm of Life to be able to give life to those who dwell on the earth. There are many born again believers who still find their life and existence in the earth and have never truly known their true home in Christ. This message is shared not so that those who hear it can stick it in their doctrine pocket and keep living in the wilderness of this earth, but that they would come away and dwell in Christ too! We are to be as ambassadors coming from a distant land with the good news of life in Christ! We cannot be satisfied until we all grow up into Him in all things (Eph. 4:15).

Others might consider that this place in Christ seems ethereal and unstable in the view of getting caught up in some “ambiguous glory – cloud”. Be assured, the scriptures also declare that this place in Christ is as solid as a rock and the surest foundation in the universe. It’s the only place that can’t be destroyed, stolen from, or touched by man. He is the One by Whom all things consist, the foundation upon which all things were built, and the cornerstone out from whence all others stone were laid. Just remember, the things that were unseen created the things that are seen (Heb. 11:3). Jesus Christ is Lord! The things that we can see are temporal and passing away even now, but the things that are not seen are eternal for they will forever exist as the only true reality (II Cor. 4:18).

God’s Blueprint For Union

“And behold that thou make them after their pattern, which was shown thee in the mount”

(Exodus 25:40, Hebrews 8:5).

Moses, who communed with God face to face and spent much time with the Lord, probably began to get the impression that God really wanted to be able to dwell in men. We have already discussed the scriptures that declare that even before the earth was formed God had counseled in Himself that this would happen and in turn formed an eternal plan to bring this forth (Eph. 1:3,4,9,11). And so, as Moses communed with God in His Cloud on Mount Sinai, God began to share His heart and purpose for union with man. He began to show Moses how to build the tabernacle in the wilderness according to the True Tabernacle that would one day be raised in the Body of His Son. The greatness of the mystery of how this Eternal God could dwell in men would be revealed in this Tabernacle. To God’s heart it spoke of the mystery that was at that time hidden to men, but was concerning His Son Who would make a New Covenant of Oneness with man and through His death would make of two One in Himself. Each part of the tabernacle’s design represented what God’s Son would fulfill as He brought man into union with God through His death and resurrection. And so when God would view this tabernacle from above He would see from within His own heart that one day there would be a way for Him to be in union with us through His Son. This tabernacle was a shadow that was the blue-print of God’s express plan to be able to make His home in man. God told Moses to go back down to the camp in the wilderness and have the people build this tabernacle, and to be sure to do everything according to the pattern that he had received in the Mount.

The Cloud’s Next Destination

“And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered the tabernacle”

(Numbers 9:15a).

While the children of Israel were building the tabernacle in the wilderness, the Presence of God was only appearing on Mount Sinai or in Moses' tent. I am sure that God's Cloud of His Presence was ready to take another step closer to His ultimate purpose of dwelling in us!

Then the day finally arrived! The people had finished building the tabernacle! As soon as that happened, God's Cloud was on the move again! *Numbers 9:15* says, "*And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of the testimony; and at evening there was upon the tabernacle, as it were, the appearance of fire, until the morning.*" God's heart did not want to dwell far away from us in a place we could never reach. He was desiring to inhabit us, and this tabernacle that the Israelite's built represented that one day He would be able to do just that. I am sure God's Presence knew He belonged covering and filling this tabernacle! He was saying, "This is My plan and this is a sign foreshadowing that I will make my home in you and you can make your home in Me!" Can you see how God has so desired for us to dwell in Him so that He could dwell in us? He had from the beginning come forth with such a detailed and wonderful plan so that eventually, in the fullness of time, God could live in man, and man could live in God through Christ! The good news for us now is that this time has already come, and we can know God in this incredible oneness in a location called "In Christ". ***