

## **Sermon Series: Set Free – How God Delivers, Develops, & Deploys His People**

### **Sermon Title: Follow the Flame and Cling to the Cloud**

#### **Exodus 13:20–22**

A few years ago, a major airport experienced a complete power outage. Every screen went dark. The lights went out. All the electronic signs people depended on to find their gates, their flights, their connections—gone. People panicked. Some froze. Some wandered. Some ran around asking anyone in a uniform what to do.

But one group of passengers wasn't afraid.

Why? Because their pilot stepped out of the jet, raised a flashlight, and announced, **“Follow me. I'll get you where you need to go.”**

That single beam of light became the only source of direction in a building full of confusion. Hundreds were lost—but those who followed the pilot weren't.

They didn't need a map.

They didn't need a screen.

They didn't need full visibility.

**They only needed the one who knew the way.**

When Israel escaped Egypt, the Lord did not leave them lost, lonely, or lacking. Instead, He provided them with a divine navigation system—the Cloud by day and the Fire by night.

This wasn't the first time we see God appear in fire. That began in Exodus 3 at the burning bush.

Jesus later said:

*“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”* — **John 8:12**

The writer of Hebrews reminds us:

*“Our God is a consuming fire.”* — **Hebrews 12:29**

And Revelation declares:

*“They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light.”* — **Revelation 22:5**

This pillar of cloud and fire becomes a rich picture of who God is and how He leads His people.

### **1. The Pillar Pictured God's Power**

A tour guide once led a group through a massive hydroelectric dam. As they walked, they heard loud humming and felt the concrete walls vibrating. A visitor asked, “Where’s the machinery that’s making all that noise?”

The guide laughed. “This isn’t noise—it’s power. You can’t see the force of the water—but you can feel it, and you can see what it does.”

That’s the pillar of fire: not always visible in meaning, but undeniably powerful in effect.

**Let me clear a space and pitch a fit right here—God’s power has never been hidden from His people!**

Here are just a few examples:

## **1. Creation**

**Genesis 1:1** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

How should you respond when someone demands, “Prove there’s a God”?

Just smile and say, **“Prove there isn’t.”**

Scripture never argues God’s existence—it simply **announces** it.

- *“You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power... Nothing is too hard for You.” — Jeremiah 32:17*
- *“His invisible attributes... are clearly seen... so they are without excuse.” — Romans 1:20*

## **2. The Plagues in Egypt**

### **3. The Red Sea**

### **4. The Day the Sun Stood Still (Joshua 10)**

### **5. Elijah on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18)**

### **6. The Deliverance of the Three Hebrew Boys (Daniel 3)**

### **7. Daniel in the Lions’ Den (Daniel 6)**

## **8. The Miracles of Jesus**

- Calming the storm — **Mark 4:35–41**
- Casting out demons — **Mark 5:1–20**
- Raising Lazarus — **John 11:1–44**

## 9. The Resurrection

### 10. Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4)

The Spirit appeared as **tongues of fire**, again reminding God's people of His guiding, empowering presence.

The pillar was a continual reminder that God had not only freed His people—but was directing them forward.

- *“Great is our Lord, and mighty in power.” — Psalm 147:5*
- *“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think...” — Ephesians 3:20*

## 2. The Pillar Provided God's Protection

**Exodus 14:19–20** describes the moment the pillar moved from in front of Israel to behind them—becoming a barrier between them and the Egyptian army. Darkness for the enemy. Light for God's people.

**God has no rivals. God has no equals.**

A farmer once showed a visitor his pasture. The man admired the land but worried about the dangerous cliffs nearby.

“Aren't you afraid your sheep will wander off the edge?” the visitor asked.

The farmer smiled. “They never get near it. There's a fence they don't even know is there.”

Then he added, “That's how God protects me too. Half the dangers I fear never come close—because God stops them before I ever see them.”

**How many dangers has God already blocked in your life—without you ever knowing?**

## 3. The Pillar Promised God's Presence

Cloud by day. Fire by night. Different form—same presence.

**Exodus 40:34–38** describes the glory of the Lord filling the tabernacle so fully that Moses couldn't even enter. When the cloud moved, the people moved. When it stayed, they stayed.

Jesus said to Philip:

*“He who has seen Me has seen the Father.” — John 14:9*

God promised:

*“I will never leave you nor forsake you.” — Hebrews 13:5*

John Wesley’s final words at age 89 were:

**“The best of all is, God is with us.”**

Paul writes:

*“You are the temple of God and...the Spirit of God dwells in you.” — 1 Corinthians 3:16*

So when someone asks, “Where is God in these difficult days? Where is God in my personal problems?”

The answer is simple:

**Right where you left Him—He hasn’t moved.**

(Like the old man and his wife in the pickup truck. She said, “We don’t sit close like we used to.” He replied, “I haven’t moved.”)

#### **4. The Pillar Prepared God’s People**

God’s guidance is often **step-by-step**, not a detailed map.

- *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” — Psalm 119:105*
- *“I will instruct you and teach you... I will guide you with My eye.” — Psalm 32:8*
- *“He will guide you into all truth.” — John 16:13*

It is entirely possible to have a **saved soul but a wasted life** if we refuse to follow God one step at a time.

#### **A Closing Picture of the Gospel**

When that airport went dark, people were confused, anxious, and directionless. The signs failed. The systems failed. Their own understanding failed.

But when the pilot stepped out, lifted his light, and said,

**“Follow me—I’ll get you where you need to go,”**

everyone who trusted him walked out of darkness into safety.

Church—that is the Gospel.

Humanity lives in a spiritual blackout.

Sin cuts the power.

Shame clouds our vision.

Fear and confusion fill the hallways of the heart.

We are lost—not because we lack intelligence, but because we lack **light**.

But just like that pilot, **Jesus stepped out—**  
out of heaven, into our darkness, into our world.

The question is not **whether** He stepped out.

The question is:

**Has He stepped into your life?**

### **Reflection & Application**

1. **Where in my life am I still trying to figure things out on my own instead of following the Savior?**
2. **How has God been showing His power, protection, or presence—but I’ve been too distracted to notice?**
3. **What “next step” is God asking me to take, even if He’s not showing me the full map?**