

Exodus 40:34-38

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-40/exodus-4034-38/>

Now that the tabernacle had been erected, the LORD came to dwell amongst His people. He appeared as a cloud, like before, and His glory came to reside in the tabernacle.

The tabernacle was now built, and its furnishings were now in place. Then it happened that *the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle*. The *cloud* was the visible manifestation of the presence of the LORD. The *cloud* had led them as they departed from Egypt ([Exodus 13:21](#)). God spoke to Moses through the pillar of cloud after the sin with the golden calf ([Exodus 33:9](#)). God met with Moses on Mount Sinai and spoke to him in the thick cloud ([Exodus 19:9](#); [20:21](#)). Now the cloud “covered” the tent of meeting like it did Mount Sinai ([Exodus 24:15](#)).

The cloud was also connected with the glory of the LORD ([Exodus 16:10](#); [Num 16:42](#)).

“Glory” means the observed essence of something. As [1 Corinthians 15](#) tells us, each created thing has its own glory ([1 Corinthians 15:40-41](#)). When something or someone’s essence is corrupt, their glory is their shame ([Philippians 3:19](#)). But God is not a created thing, He is the Creator. In this instance, He chose to display His presence in the form of something familiar (a cloud) that behaved in a manner that made it clear it was a miraculous manifestation. The Bible makes it clear that the entire creation declares God’s glory ([Psalm 19](#); [Romans 1:20](#)), as it reflects His essence. When believers abide in Christ as a grape branch abides in its vine, they display God’s glory, since they demonstrate His essence by walking in the way of His Spirit, and bear His fruit ([John 15:8](#)). In this case, the people could observe God’s presence through the *cloud*.

At this time, Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses had previously met God when His presence was manifested in the form of a cloud. But at this time he was not allowed in the tabernacle when the cloud descended. It could be that this was such a very special moment that the LORD wanted to make a clear distinction. The tabernacle was going to outlast Moses. His presence was now to dwell among all the people. The people had

constructed the tabernacle, and had erected it. Now that God's presence descended, God was making clear that things were different. Not just anyone could walk in—not even Moses.

There were more directions needed for Moses and Israel before true fellowship could transpire between God and the people through the tabernacle. These rules are contained in the book of Leviticus. Meanwhile the people needed to recognize the holiness of the newly erected tabernacle while God's presence was upon it. When the cloud descends, they are to keep the proper distance, to honor God's presence. When the cloud lifts, they will be allowed to come in and dismantle the tabernacle and carry it to the next location.

Verses 36 – 38 describe how the Suzerain LORD used the cloud to guide His vassals (Israel) to the Promised Land from this point forward. These verses recollect that *throughout all their journeys whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out; but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day when it was taken up*. So, the people took down the tent and court and moved when the cloud moved, and they stayed in place when the cloud did not move.

This was true *throughout all their journeys*. During this time, *the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel*. The LORD's visible presence was always with His people, giving them guidance in the wilderness, during daylight as well as in the darkness. His presence could be seen by every Israelite so that no one could say that the LORD was not with them.

In the New Testament, the LORD is said to be with those who believe in Him ([Matthew 28:20](#); [Philippians 4:9](#); [1 Corinthians 3:16](#)). We can depend on His guidance just as Israel did on their way to the Promised Land ([Romans 8:14](#)).

Biblical Text:

³⁴ Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. ³⁵ Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. ³⁶ Throughout all their journeys whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out; ³⁷ but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day when it was taken up. ³⁸ For throughout all their journeys, the cloud of

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