

The Rock That Followed Them

One of the scriptures that is often used as definitive proof that Christ is the “God of the Old Testament” is Paul’s description of Jesus Christ as “that spiritual Rock that followed them” in 1 Corinthians 10:4. Here is this scripture in its context:

1 Cor 10:1-5

¹ Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ² all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. **For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.** ⁵ But with most of them God was not well pleased, for *their bodies* were scattered in the wilderness.

This verse clearly tells us that Christ was actively involved with the Israelites when they left Egypt and as they wandered in the wilderness. However, the question we need to ask is does this verse mean that Christ was exclusively the ONLY God Being actively involved with Israel?

To address this question we need to consider the account found in Psalms 78. In Psalms 78 we find a graphic description of the miracles God performed in bringing Israel of out Egypt and how He worked with them all throughout their time wandering in the wilderness. Notice the following excerpt from this chapter:

Ps 78:12-35

¹² Marvelous things He did in the sight of their fathers,

In the land of Egypt, *in* the field of Zoan.

¹³ **He divided the sea and caused them to pass through;**

And He made the waters stand up like a heap.

¹⁴ **In the daytime also He led them with the cloud,**

And all the night with a light of fire.

¹⁵ He split the rocks in the wilderness,

And gave *them* drink in abundance like the depths.

16 He also brought streams out of the rock,

And caused waters to run down like rivers.

17 But they sinned even more against Him

By rebelling against the Most High in the wilderness.

18 And they tested God in their heart

By asking for the food of their fancy.

19 Yes, they spoke against God:

They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?"

20 Behold, He struck the rock,

So that the waters gushed out,

And the streams overflowed.

Can He give bread also?

Can He provide meat for His people?"

21 Therefore the LORD heard *this* and was furious;

So a fire was kindled against Jacob,

And anger also came up against Israel,

22 Because they did not believe in God,

And did not trust in His salvation.

23 Yet He had commanded the clouds above,

And opened the doors of heaven,

24 Had rained down manna on them to eat,

And given them of the bread of heaven.

25 Men ate angels' food;

He sent them food to the full.

26 He caused an east wind to blow in the heavens;

And by His power He brought in the south wind.

27 He also rained meat on them like the dust,

Feathered fowl like the sand of the seas;

28 And He let *them* fall in the midst of their camp,

All around their dwellings.

29 So they ate and were well filled,

For He gave them their own desire.

30 They were not deprived of their craving;

But while their food *was* still in their mouths,

31 The wrath of God came against them,

And slew the stoutest of them,

And struck down the choice *men* of Israel.

32 In spite of this they still sinned,

And did not believe in His wondrous works.

33 Therefore their days He consumed in futility,

And their years in fear.

34 When He slew them, then they sought Him;

And they returned and sought earnestly for God.

35 Then they remembered that God was their rock,

And the Most High God their Redeemer.

We can see from the scriptures above that Psalms 78 identifies the God that performed all of these miracles for Israel as “the Most High”. This account tells us that “the Most High” is the One that parted the Red Sea, the One that provided Israel with water out of the rock, and the One that fed them with manna and quail. This account also tells us that “the Most High” is the One that led Israel with the cloud during the day and with the pillar of fire at night.

So, the question we need to ask is Who does the Bible identify as “the Most High”. Is this title also referring to Jesus Christ or could this be a reference to God the Father? To answer this question we need to look at what the Bible tells us about “the Most High”. In Mark 5 we find that Jesus Christ is referred to as the “Son of the Most High God”.

Mark 5:6-7

⁶ When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. ⁷ And he cried out with a loud voice and said, "What have I to do with You, **Jesus, Son of the Most High God**? I implore You by God that You do not torment me."

Christ is clearly not being referred to here as “the Most High”. Rather, He is being referred to as the “Son of the Most High God”. So, it is clearly God the Father Who is being referred to here as “the Most High God”. We find similar references to “the Most High” in both the books of Genesis and Hebrews.

Gen 14:18-20

¹⁸ Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; **he was the priest of God Most High**. ¹⁹ And he blessed him and said:

"Blessed be Abram of **God Most High**,

Possessor of heaven and earth;

²⁰ And blessed be **God Most High**,

Who has delivered your enemies into your hand."

Heb 7:1-3

¹ For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, **priest of the Most High God**, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ² to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated "king of righteousness," and then also king of Salem, meaning "king of peace," ³ without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.

In both of these scriptures, Jesus Christ, in His role as Melchizedek, is referred to as “priest of the Most High God”. This again shows us that Christ is not being referred to as “the Most High” but rather it is God the Father Who is being referred to as “the Most High”. Christ also told His disciples that the resurrected Saints would be “sons of the Most High”.

Luke 6:35-36

³⁵ But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and **you will be sons of the Most High**. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. ³⁶ Therefore be merciful, just as **your Father** also is merciful.

This again shows us that “the Most High” is a title for God the Father and not a title for Jesus Christ. If we look at the Hebrew and Greek words that are translated as “Most High” in both the Old and New Testaments it further validates the conclusion that “Most High” is a title for God the Father and not a title for Jesus Christ. The Hebrew word translated as Most High in the Old Testament is “elyon” (Strong’s # 5945). The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament by Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter defines this word as “A masculine noun meaning Most High, the Highest”. The Greek word translated as “Most High” in the New Testament is “hupsistos” (Strong’s # 5310). The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament by Spiros Zodhiates defines this word as “Highest, most elevated, loftiest”. So, both the Hebrew and Greek words for “Most High” tell us that the individual being referred to with this term is the One in the “highest” position. By definition there can only be one Most High. Jesus Christ clearly stated that His Father is superior to Himself.

John 14:28

²⁸ You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming *back* to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' **for My Father is greater than I.**

In addition, Paul clearly tells us that God the Father is the head of Jesus Christ.

1 Cor 11:3

³ But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman *is* man, and **the head of Christ is God.**

So, we can see that the Bible consistently uses “the Most High” as a title for God the Father and not as a title for Jesus Christ. As we previously saw, Psalms 78 tells us that it was the “Most High” that led Israel in the wilderness with the cloud during the day and the pillar of fire at night. Psalms 78 is telling us that it was God the Father that was personally leading Israel. This means that **both** God the Father and Jesus Christ were actively involved with Israel when they came out of Egypt and as they wandered in the wilderness. 1 Corinthians 10 tells us that Jesus Christ was “that spiritual Rock that **followed them**” and Psalms 78 tells us that the Most High “**led them**” with the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night.

To understand Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 10 that Christ “followed them” we need to look at the Greek word translated here as “followed”. The Greek word here is “akoloutheo” (Strong’s # 190). The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament by Spiros Zodhiates defines this word as “To attend, to accompany, to go with or follow a teacher”. So, Paul is telling us that Christ “accompanied” the Israelites but Psalms tells us it was God the Father that “led them”. If we look at the account in the book of Exodus we will see this is exactly what it tells us.

Ex 13:18-22

¹⁸ **So God led the people** around *by* way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up in orderly ranks out of the land of Egypt.

¹⁹ And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had placed the children of Israel under solemn oath, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here with you."

²⁰ So they took their journey from Succoth and camped in Etham at the edge of the wilderness. ²¹ And **the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way**, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. ²² He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night *from* before the people.

Ex 14:19

¹⁹ And **the Angel of God**, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them.

The “Angel of God” spoken of here is the One Who later became Jesus Christ. Notice that the translators here capitalized “Angel” as they recognize that this is a reference to the One Who became Jesus Christ and is not referring to a created angelic being. (The title “Angel of God” does NOT imply that He is a created angelic being. He is clearly an Eternal God Being. The Hebrew word for Angel in the Old Testament is “malak” and it simply means

“messenger”. This title indicates He is acting as the Messenger of God the Father.) So, we can see that **both** God the Father and Jesus Christ were actively involved with the Israelites throughout their exodus from Egypt and their years of wandering in the wilderness. When 1 Corinthians 10 tells us that Christ is “that spiritual Rock that followed them” it is definitely telling us that Jesus Christ was actively involved with Ancient Israel but it is **NOT** telling us that Christ was the **ONLY** God Being that was actively involved with them. God the Father was definitely actively involved with Israel as well.