

The Veil is Gone!

"When Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, He gave up His spirit. At that moment, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom." Matthew 27:50-51

Before Christ's death on the cross, the way into the "holy of holies" in the temple of God was blocked by a thick veil or curtain. What was the purpose of this veil and what is its symbolic connection with Christ's death? To begin, we need to go back to the original design of the tabernacle of God in the wilderness (see Exodus Chapters 25-27). God commanded Moses to build the tabernacle "according to the pattern" that He had shown him (Exodus 25:9; Hebrews 8:5). When the temple in Jerusalem was later constructed, it followed this similar design. By God's command, a thick veil separated and closed off the inner room - "the holy of holies" - from the rest of the temple (Exodus 26:31-33). Within the holy of holies resided the Ark of the Covenant where God's presence dwelt (Exodus 25:22; 1 Kings 8:9-13). Inside the Ark of the Covenant was the Law of God (the Ten Commandments inscribed on two stone tablets). Only the high priest could enter inside the veil and then only once a year, on the Day of Atonement. On that day, the high priest would go into the inner room (the holy of holies) to sprinkle the blood of a unblemished, sacrificial animal on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant to atone for the sins of the people (Leviticus 16:1-34).

Why did God give detailed instructions to Moses concerning the construction of the tabernacle? God's eternal purpose and desire has always been to dwell among His people and commune with them. The tabernacle's design was meant to show how a sinful people could approach a holy God. It also foreshadowed how Christ would open the way for us to truly know God (Hebrews 8:1-13). The Bible says, "These things are a shadow of the things to come, but the reality is found in Christ (Colossians 2:17)." With this in mind, what did the veil signify? The veil signified that the way to God was closed off to people because they were sinners

(Hebrews 9:8-10). Therefore, the veil was a barrier that blocked sinful man from seeing God and having fellowship with Him. Only the high priest was allowed to enter through the veil and only by offering the blood of an unblemished animal, which was a type of the sinless Lamb of God to come - Jesus Christ. As Peter wrote, "You were redeemed... with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect (1 Peter 1:18-19)."

When Jesus died on the cross, the veil in the temple was torn open from top to bottom. The Bible says this event signified the start of the new covenant and the opening of a new and living way to know God (Hebrews 9:15; 10:20). Why is this? The torn veil represented Christ's body that was put to death on the cross to bring us to God. The Bible says, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting men's sins against them (2 Corinthians 5:19)." But if forgiveness of sins was the only benefit of Christ's death on the cross, our reconciliation to God would not be made complete. For not only did our sins separate us from God, our sinful nature also separated us from entering into spiritual union with God. How could we dwell in God's presence and how could He possibly dwell in us if we still had a sinful nature? Only the removal of our sinful nature could enable God's Holy Spirit to permanently dwell in us.

Therefore, not only did God forgive our sins through Christ's crucifixion, God used His Son's death to remove our sinful nature. For when Christ died on the cross, He not only took our sins upon Himself, He also took our sinful nature upon Himself so that we would be born again with His righteous nature. The Bible says, "He became sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21)." Consequently, when Christ died, our sinful nature died with Him. "For we know that our old man was crucified with Him in order that our body of sin (*our sinful nature*) might be destroyed, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin! (Romans 6:6-7)." Thus God made us holy through His Son's death: holy not just because our sins are forgiven, but

holy because we no longer have a sinful nature. We are now a new creation in Christ - "created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:24; see also 2 Corinthians 5:17)."

Jesus said, "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3)." Why is this? Because until you are born again, your sinful nature is like a veil or curtain upon your heart that blinds you from seeing and knowing God. As Paul wrote, "If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing (2 Corinthians 4:3)." However, the Bible says that whenever a man turns to Christ and is born again, this veil (*his sinful nature*) is removed so that he can then see and know God (2 Corinthians 3:18). Paul taught, "In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, *in the removal of the sinful nature*, by the circumcision of Christ (Colossians 2:11)." Therefore, the torn veil signifies the removal of our sinful nature that occurs when we are born again in Christ. Thus Jesus Christ, by His death on the cross, has delivered us from the curse of sin (by forgiving our sins and removing our sinful nature) so that we could be reconciled to a holy God.

This is why the crucifixion of Jesus Christ is the most momentous event in human history. With the advent of the new covenant, the temple in Jerusalem ceased to be the place where God's people worshipped Him (but could never enter into His presence). Because of the blood of Jesus, we can now worship God "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:21-24). God can dwell in us by His Spirit and we can be His holy temple (1 Corinthians 3:16). Because of the blood of Jesus, there no longer is any veil or barrier that can separate us from God's love and intimate friendship.

"Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He opened for us through the veil, that is, His body... let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith." Hebrews 10:19-22