

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

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PART 84: THE TEARING OF THE VEIL

DARKNESS

None of the Gospel writers shared what took place during the three-hour period of supernatural darkness over Judea.

- ❖ There is no mention as to what the apostles thought about the bizarre darkness.
- ❖ Nor is there any information concerning the words and actions of the ungodly Jewish leadership during this time.
- ❖ There was no discussion as to what the Roman soldiers stationed at Golgotha thought about the matter.
- ❖ The onlookers did nothing as well; no one had experienced anything supernatural like it before.

I can only conclude this miraculous event featured a period of silence. No human could explain the unnatural darkness in the middle of the day. Hence, the writers' failure to offer an explanation concerning the darkness. **Matthew 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44**

This phenomenon was taking place because the Light of the World hung on a cross to pay for the sins of humanity. **John 1:4-5, 9-10**

PHYSICAL DEATH

Jesus was the shepherd sent by God the Father to care for the sheep. The God-man stated that He was willing to "give His life" and "lay down My life" for the Jews and Gentiles. It was His prerogative to ransom His life for the sheep. No one could forcibly take it from Him. It was also within His power to rise from the dead after satisfying God the Father's divine justice. **John 10:11-18**

Matthew and Mark recorded that Jesus cried out with a loud voice prior to leaving His lifeless body on the cross. **Matthew 27:50; Mark 15:37;**

Luke added that Jesus also cried out with a loud voice and said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." **Luke 23:46**

John noted that the Son of God stated "It is finished" because the redemptive work was concluded. **John 19:30b**

VEIL OF THE TEMPLE

The death of Jesus' physical body set in motion a chain of events. **Matthew 27:51-53**

1. The huge veil in the temple isolating the holy of holies tore from top to bottom.
2. A violent earthquake that split rocks.
3. Many dead were resurrected.



The veil in the temple separated the holy place where the priests ministered from the holy of holies; a sacred place which the high priest entered once a year to make atonement for the people. **Exodus 26:31-33**

The veil was woven from blue, purple, and scarlet (red) threads into strands and into cords measuring three and a half inches thick. This immense curtain of fine linen measured sixty feet in height and thirty feet wide and was held up by four pillars.

The fact that it was torn from top to bottom is significant because it showed God did the work; in contrast, mankind would have ripped it from the bottom up. This supernatural event was God the Father's way of communicating that the separation between Him and mankind had been removed. The exclusive privilege of the high priest was now available to everyone.

For the veil to be ripped in two must have been a great shock to the priests on duty in the temple. They must have sent word to Caiaphas that *holy of holies* stood exposed for all to see. This was a supernatural event that could not be denied, but the religious leadership was determined to suppress the information and repair the veil. They were so possessed by demons that they refused to accept this event had something to do with the death of Jesus, instigated by God the Father.

To provide proof that the rending of the veil was suppressed by the Jewish leadership, Solomon Grayzel's scholastic work failed to mention this event despite providing detailed descriptions of Judas' betrayal, Jesus' arrest, the trial, and subsequent crucifixion.¹

TEMPLE LAYOUT

To understand the significance of the veil, it is first necessary to be familiar with the architectural layout of the building designed for sacrifices to God and worship. The temple was divided into two areas:

1. Walking through the doors to the first room provided access to the *holy place*. This was the main chamber used for services and contained an altar of incense, table for bread, and a golden lampstand.
 - a. The golden lampstand (menorah) comprised a central stem with three branches on either side, each topped with a lamp, for a total of seven lamps.
 - b. The table of shewbread featured bread as its name implies, baked weekly, from which only priests were allowed to partake.
 - c. The altar of incense featured incense burned each morning and evening as an offering to God. The altar was furthest from the doors and stood in front of a large veil.
2. The second room, the *holy of holies*, was separated from the *holy place* by a thick linen curtain. The room contained the Ark of the Covenant, which

¹ Grayzel, Solomon: A HISTORY OF THE JEWS, The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1947, pp.133-136

represented the physical presence of God, and served to remind the Israelites of the covenant He had made with them.

- a. The Ark of the Covenant was a rectangular acacia wood box measuring 4' x 2' x 2'. The box was gilded with gold inside and out. Its lid was made from pure gold and featured two golden winged angels facing each other. The lid was nicknamed the "mercy seat" because it represented a place of reconciliation between God and mankind.
- b. The Ark contained the following:
 - i. The two tablets of stone Moses received from God inscribed with the Ten Commandments.
 - ii. Aaron's rod, a walking stick that supernaturally budded to produce flowers and ripe almonds as a testimony to God's selection of Moses as the leader.
 - iii. A pot of manna which served to remind the Israelites of their supernatural preservation in the wilderness when God fed them on a daily basis.

PURPOSE OF THE VEIL

What was the purpose of the veil in the temple? The apostle Paul contrasts the Old Testament sacrificial system with Jesus' role as our high priest. The temple on earth contained the holy place and holy of holies (holiest of all) which contained the Ark of the Covenant with a pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the Ten Commandments.

The priests regularly entered the *holy place* to perform their duties, but only the high priest could enter the *holy of holies* annually to make a blood offering for the sins of the people.

These rituals were temporary and symbolized a greater spiritual truth. Jesus, unlike the high priests, entered a "greater and more perfect tabernacle" not made by human hands. He did not use the blood of animals, but used His own blood, and in doing so, obtained the salvation we now enjoy. **Hebrews 9:1-12**

Paul encourages believers to confidently approach God the Father because of what Jesus has done. We have access to the *holy of holies* by a "new and living way" that is made possible through Jesus' bodily sacrifice on the cross.

His physical body was symbolical of the veil; His flesh was torn by the scourge and crucifixion, and when the sin debt was paid on the cross, God the Father ordered the curtain in the temple to follow suit, signifying the separation between God and mankind had been removed. Jesus now serves as an eternal high priest over the church.

Hebrews 10:19-23

This is why the veil in the temple was supernaturally torn from the top to the bottom. The redemptive work gives mankind access to the *holy of holies*.

The prophetic words of Jesus continued to be fulfilled.

“...the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.” (Matthew 20:18-19)

Remember, it's not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!

Do you have an ear to hear with?