

# Through the Torn Veil

By Al Felder

*“<sup>50</sup>Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. <sup>51</sup>And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; <sup>52</sup>And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, <sup>53</sup>and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. <sup>54</sup>Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.” (Matthew 27:50-54)*

The events that occurred at the death of Christ were unlike any before or after. At the very moment that our Lord’s lips were silent and He breathed His last breath, God began to speak in the unmistakable language of supernatural signs and wonders. The veil in the Temple was torn from top to bottom, there was an earthquake, rocks were split, graves were opened, and Luke records that the Sun was dark for three hours. While these miracles are indeed awe inspiring, we must not forget their purpose. For just a little while we would like to consider the significance of the torn veil in the Temple. We will entitle our remarks “Through the Torn Veil.”

The Temple that had been originally built by Solomon was destroyed in 586 BC by the Babylonians. Then, in 538 BC the Persians allowed the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild the Temple. From the rubble that remained, the Jews began to reconstruct the Temple. The sacred vessels that had been stolen from the Temple by the Babylonians were returned and nearly seventy years after it had been destroyed the Temple stood again. This was the Temple that existed during the day of Jesus.

There are many items that were within the Temple we could talk about, but only one is the subject of our conversation at this time. That item is the veil, in particular the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. You see, there was an outer veil that covered the entrance to the Temple as well as the inner veil that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place.

According to the instructions that God gave Moses, the veil was beautifully embroidered with blue, scarlet, and purple thread. It was also designed with cherubim. *“And thou shalt make a veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubim shall it be made.” (Exodus 26:31)* The veil was sixty feet long from top to bottom, thirty feet wide, and four inches thick. It is said that it took 300 men to put the veil in its place.

Under the Law of Moses, the veil separated the presence of God from the people. Behind the veil laid the Ark of the Covenant containing the golden pot with manna, Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant. Over the contents were the cherubim covering the mercy seat. This area represented the very throne room of God.

Only the high priest was permitted to enter the Most Holy Place. He did this once a year on the Day of Atonement. *“But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people.”* (Hebrews 9:7) On this day the high priest would pull back the edge of the veil, and enter the Most Holy Place with the blood of the sacrifice for himself and the people of Israel. Then, he would sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before it. If any of God’s commands were not followed exactly during this ritual, God would strike down the high priest.

While the Day of Atonement itself pointed to Christ, the veil signified no admittance. *“The Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.”* (Hebrews 9:8) Approach to God was very rare and limited. To everyone, except the yearly approach by the high priest, the veil said stay away. Once the high priest entered on that day, the veil quickly closed forbidding an entrance to any other person.

The veil symbolized that under the Law of Moses the way to God was not yet opened. At this time there was not yet a freedom to access God directly for all men. As long as the veil remained in place men had no hope of immediate access to God. The death of Jesus changed all that.

The death of Jesus ushered in a new and better covenant. *“<sup>19</sup>Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup>By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.”* (Hebrews 10:19, 20) Through the torn veil God was saying something to Israel, and the entire world, about the suffering and death of Christ. Jesus has opened the approach to God. All of the animal sacrifices made under the Law of Moses pointed to the way; but the death of Christ is the actual, true, and only way to the Father.

The Law of Moses abounded with boundaries because Jesus had not yet shed His blood. There were boundaries around Mount Sinai so that the people would not come too close to God’s presence and perish (Exodus 19:12). There were boundaries with the tabernacle and the temple. There was a boundary for the Gentiles. There was a boundary for the non-priestly Jews. There was even a boundary for the regular priests.

The death of Jesus removed all of these boundaries. In Christ there is no separation of Jew and Gentile. *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”* (Galatians 3:28) In Christ there is no longer a priestly hierarchy for we are all priests. *“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”* (1 Peter 2:5) Jesus has made the way clear.

Can you imagine what a shocking and frightening experience the rending of the veil was for those who were present that day? The Bible says that the veil was torn right down the middle from top to bottom. It occurred during the evening offering of incense. The priests

performing their service were able to see for the first time what no one but the high priest had seen.

The noise from the quick tearing of such a large and thick curtain would have been exceedingly loud and startling. I could take a piece of paper, tear it in half, and I imagine that most of you would be able to hear it. Think about how loud the noise would have been from the tearing of a curtain that was sixty feet long, thirty feet wide, and four inches thick. The multitudes of people who were gathered outside of the temple in the courtyard would have heard the loud sound of the curtain tearing.

As word spread throughout Jerusalem about the torn veil, it would not have taken long for people to realize that it occurred at the exact time of the death of Christ. Caiaphas the high priest had to have known that this was the act of God, but he ignored it just as he did the miracles performed by Christ. History records that Caiaphas ordered the veil repaired and put back in its place.

While the tearing of the veil proclaimed grace to everyone throughout the world who would come to God through Jesus, it proclaimed judgment upon the Jews who had rejected Christ. With the death of Jesus the Law of Moses came to an end; those who rejected Him no longer had an avenue to God. The rending of the veil was a warning sign to the Jews that their only hope was to turn to Jesus and obey Him. God made the message even clearer when He caused the temple to be destroyed in AD 70.

Those who continued to hold on to the Old Law still had a veil separating them and God.

*“<sup>7</sup>But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: <sup>8</sup>how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? <sup>9</sup>For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. <sup>10</sup>For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. <sup>11</sup>For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious. <sup>12</sup>Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: <sup>13</sup>And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: <sup>14</sup>but their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. <sup>15</sup>But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. <sup>16</sup>Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.” (2 Corinthians 3:7-16)*

The Law of Moses was glorious. Anything God does is glorious. The Law of Moses was glorious, but temporary from the moment of its revealing. It was destined to be fulfilled by that which was permanently glorious – the Gospel.

The Law of Moses came with such splendor that the children of Israel could not look at Moses' face because of its brightness. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai after being with God, his face glowed from being in the presence of God. His brother Aaron and the other Israelites were afraid to come near him. This glory, however, faded signifying the eventual end of the Law.

The transfiguration of Jesus was a sign to the apostles that Jesus coming with the dispensation of the Spirit was to be with even greater splendor than the dispensation of death given to Moses.

*"<sup>2</sup>And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. <sup>3</sup>And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. <sup>4</sup>And there appeared unto them Elijah with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup>And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. <sup>6</sup>For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. <sup>7</sup>And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. <sup>8</sup>And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves." (Mark 9:2-8)*

The face of Jesus shone like the sun, and His garments were as white as light. In fact, there was nothing on earth that could have possibly made them any whiter. Moses and Elijah appeared representing the Law and the prophets. God spoke and told the apostles to listen to Jesus. After God spoke the disciples looked around and saw no one but Jesus. The law was to disappear in Him having been fulfilled.

The glory of the Gospel far exceeds that of the Law. The Gospel is permanent. It will never fade away. It was the promise according to faith from the beginning, and the Law which came 430 years later did not annul the promise. *"And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed."* (Galatians 3:8) Justification by faith in Jesus has always been God's plan. It has been God's permanent, most glorious, dispensation of grace from the foundation of the world. The law served a temporary purpose in preparing the world for the coming of Christ.

Moses put a veil over his face when he talked to the Israelites, and removed it when he spoke with God. The Bible states that he did this so the Israelites would not see the end of the glory as it faded away. The fading glory of Moses' face was a symbol of the fading glory of the Old Covenant. The Jews killed the prophets for proclaiming this message, they killed Christ, and they authorized the deaths of many of the apostles.

The veil covering the face of Moses was also a symbol of the hardening of the hearts of the Jews in rejecting Christ. During the day that Paul wrote these words, a veil covered the hearts of the Jews whenever the Law of Moses was read. In their rejection of Christ they were

blinded and could not see the way. Their only hope was to turn to Christ. Only He can remove the veil.

In closing, the rending of the veil demonstrates that Jesus is the only way to the Father. If any man or woman desires to have fellowship with God they must pass through the torn veil of the sacrificial death of Jesus. If you place your trust in the person and work of Christ the door to heaven stands wide open. You are free to approach the very throne of God with boldness because of the blood of Christ. If, however, you try to enter by another way you will find no entrance. If you are without Christ, you are without the Father and without hope. You will die in your sins, and the door to heaven will forever remain closed to you.