

# The Veil in the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant

What were their significance and what had they to do with Jesus Christ?



The Tabernacle of Israel was divided into two rooms by a thick veil of blue, purple and scarlet material and fine twisted linen. On it was woven the cherubim.

In the Holy Place was located the Altar of Incense, the lamp stand, and the table for the bread of Presence.

In the second room, the Most Holy Place or Holy of Holies were the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat, which had a solid gold lid placed on top of the Ark. It was also the place of propitiation where sins were covered by the sprinkled blood of the innocent sacrifice.

Behind the Veil in the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of the divine presence, the Shekinah-glory shining above the Mercy Seat, and between the figures of the cherubims.



“And thou shalt make a veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made: And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold: their hooks shall be of gold, upon the four sockets of silver. And thou shalt hang up the veil under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the veil the ark of the testimony: and the veil shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy.” (*Exodus 26:31-33, KJV*)

It was not the object of the Veil to give access to God; for it was that which prevented it. It shut the door and said, “No further.”

The Jewish historian Josephus said the veil was four inches thick, and that horses tied to each side could not pull the veil apart.

## The Purpose of the Veil

The purpose of the veil was to hide and to bar everyone from entering the symbolic presence of God except the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. The only way the High Priest could stand alive on the other side of the veil was by sprinkling on the veil the blood of his substitute.

The purpose of the veil was to keep people out of the Holy of Holies. It told sinful man that he could not approach God except by His prescribed means. It stood in the way to God's presence. It was a closed door. The only person who could enter the Holy of Holies and remain alive was the High Priest with the blood of the substitute sacrifice, and then only on the Day of Atonement (*Exodus 26:31-35; Leviticus 16*). But he could never enter without the blood. It was a constant reminder that sin separates the sinner from God.

The figure of the cherubim woven on the Veil taught the same lesson; sinful man can come no further. He cannot approach the ineffably holy God without the blood of the substitutionary sacrifice.

Sure, the Veil was beautiful, but it was not the beautiful Veil that made entrance into God's presence possible. The only way a guilty sinner could pass to the other side of the Veil into the Holy of Holies and live was by way of the sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifice. It was by the blood of atonement that the way into the throne room of God was opened.

**There is only one way into God's holy presence; it is the blood of sacrifice.**

Moreover, Aaron's sacrifice foreshadowed the perfect sacrifice of our Great High Priest (Jesus Christ) in the Heavenly Sanctuary. As long as the veil in the Temple was unrent the true sacrifice had not yet been provided. However, when the veil in the Temple was torn from top to bottom it meant the true sacrifice had been offered up to the LORD God and accepted by Him as the perfect offering for sin.

**The blood on the Veil [and the Ark of the Covenant] changed the throne of God from a throne of judgment to a throne of grace.**



## **The Body of Jesus was a 'Veil'**

The writer of Hebrews tells us the Veil in the Tabernacle represented the humanity of Jesus. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 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*). The humanity of Christ is the standard humanity in which alone God can enthrone Himself.

The body of Jesus was a 'veil' that hid the inner glory of His deity. With the exception of Jesus Christ all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Only in Christ dwelt the glory of God. Only that which was sinless and perfect could enter the presence of the LORD God. "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (*Colossians 2:9*). "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;" (*Colossians 1:19*). The Veil was a silent symbol of the Incarnation (*1 Timothy 3:16*). Jesus was "holy, harmless, and separate from sinners." No one can measure up to the perfect life of Jesus.

The life of Christ was the only life acceptable to God, but the life of Jesus can never save us. The sinless, perfect, holy, righteous life of Jesus had to be rent on the cross and His blood spilt if man is to be saved.

**The Veil is the perfect symbol and the absolute affirmation that “God was in Christ.” But let us be very clear that we draw near to God in the secret place of communion and fellowship with Him, not by the perfect life of Christ, but by His atoning sacrificial death.**

The apostle Peter referred to the day when he saw that inner glory burst through the veil on the Mt. of Transfiguration. Peter wrote: “... we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.” (*2 Peter 1:16-18*).

Matthew tells us on that occasion Jesus took with Him Peter, James and John up to a high mountain by themselves. “And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them **Moses** and **Elias** talking with him.” Moses and Elijah appeared with Him talking about His coming death. Matthew then writes, “... a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.’” (*Mathew 17:2-3, 5*). Here was the Shekinah glory in the face of Jesus! The veil of His flesh could contain Him no longer. The glory of His deity burst forth. (*cf. Philippians 2:5-11*).

The unrent Veil shut man out from a holy God. It declared the separation from God because of sin. “But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption” (*Hebrews 9:11-12*).

## **The Tearing of the Veil**



The veil is symbolic of the incarnate life of Jesus, and the tearing of the veil was His death on the cross. The death of Christ opened a new and living way into the presence of God. At the same time, the purpose of the physical Temple in Jerusalem ended. Since Jesus had offered up to God the Father the perfect sacrifice for sin, it was no longer needed.

“And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” (*Hebrews 10:21-22*).

Something happened in the Temple in the very moment that Christ died on the cross. Mark 15:37-38 tells us when He died, “And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.” (*cf. Matthew 27:51*). Luke says, “And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.” (*Luke, 23:45*). The act was complete the moment Jesus died.

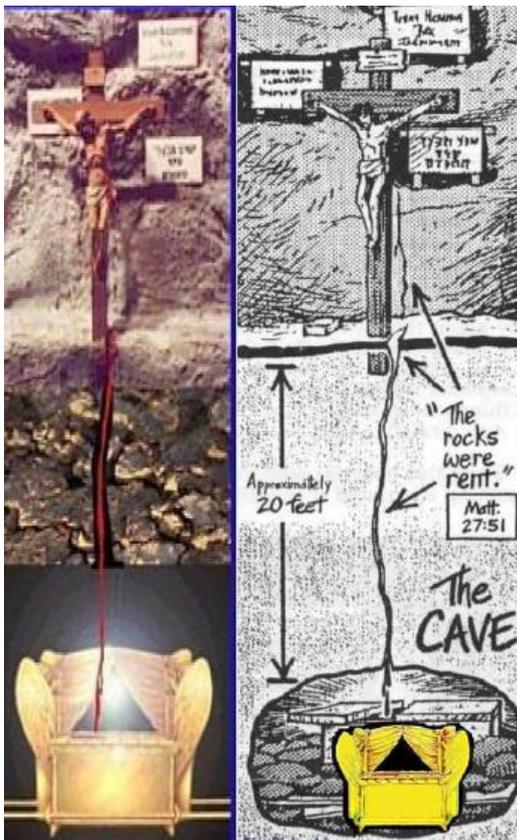
The Veil was rent, telling out in symbolic way that the entrance into God was now open, and that it required nothing short of the death of Christ. The purpose of His incarnation is revealed. He did not come in the flesh to set an example, but to offer His body as a vicarious, substitutionary sacrifice for sin. The Veil was rent at the very hour of the evening sacrifice. At the very hour the Passover Lamb was being slain the Veil was torn from top to bottom, and at that moment Jesus cried, **“It is finished”** (*John. 19:30*). “... Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (*1 Corinthians 5:7*).

Only God could do that because the top of the veil was beyond man's reach. A way was opened into the presence of God, who no longer occupied the Holy of Holies in the Temple, but heaven, itself. There was nothing behind the veil in the Holy of Holies in Herod's Temple! The Ark had been ~~destroyed~~ [hidden away by Jeremiah (*Jer 3:16*)] ~~when~~ [before] the Babylonians destroyed Solomon's Temple. The death of Christ takes us into the presence of the LORD Himself. The shadows and types of the Tabernacle and Temple were turned into substance.

It is as if God the Father did, as any Jewish father would have done at the deathbed of his only son. It was customary for Jewish mourners to take hold of their outer garment with both hands and tear it. The “hands” of God tore the thick veil of the Temple from top to bottom.

But it also reminds us of Isaiah 53:10, “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.” The wrath of God fell on Him. The mighty hand of God cut Him off. “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.” (*Zechariah 13:7*; cf. *Matthew 26:31*)

Jesus Christ is our all-sufficient propitiation. **It was His blood on the Mercy Seat that turned away the wrath of God, and opened the way into the presence of God for all men who will believe on Him.**



We now have free full entrance into the presence of God the Father through His Son. The only way is through the blood of atonement. The rent veil changed at once from a barrier to an open way into the Holy of Holies.

The writer of Hebrews explains: “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” (*Hebrews 10:10-14*).

The precious blood of the perfect humanity of Jesus was shed and it alone is our permit to enter God’s presence. Moreover, the blood of Jesus preserves us alive when we enter into God’s presence. “. . . the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” (*1 John 1:7*). He alone is our all-sufficient propitiation (*1 John. 2:2*). The session in Heaven at the right hand of God proclaims a finished sacrifice. He offered one sacrifice for sins forever.

Jesus said to His disciple Thomas, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (*John 14:6*). A few moments later Jesus said to another disciple, Philip: “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake.” (*John 14:9-11*).

The apostle Peter concluded a sermon saying, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (*Acts 4:12*).

Peter can preach these words because the precious blood of the Lamb of God has been shed, the substitutionary sacrifice for sin has been offered, and the Veil has been rent once and for all by Jesus Christ.

We can now enter into the holiest presence of God because Jesus received the wages of sin on our behalf. However, in God’s wondrous grace we have been dressed with the pure robes of His perfect righteousness. We can now boldly enter into God’s presence for all eternity.

With outstretched arms, He invites us to come and join Him in the Holy of Holies in the eternal heavenly Sanctuary. Will you join me there? In God’s sight we too have risen and ascended into Heaven and are seated there before Him at His right hand in Christ (*cf. Ephesians. 2:4-6*).

[Source](#)