

## Study #8 The Veil

### Introduction

The very presence of YHWH was to be found in the Holy of Holies and because of God's holiness, no-one could enter there apart from the High Priest of Israel and even he could enter but once a year on the Day of Atonement. The Holy of Holies (cf Study #9) was separated from the Holy Place, the place of fellowship with God by the veil.

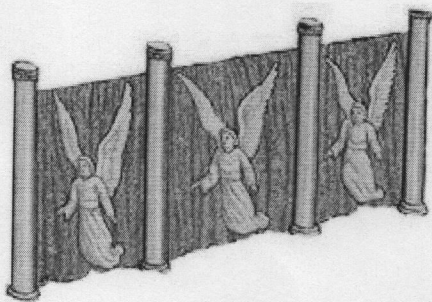


Fig 8.1 The veil separating the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place

### The Appearance of the Veil

Once again, Moses received very specific instructions from God on the makeup of the veil. These instructions are found in Exodus 26.31-33: *"Make a curtain to separate the holy place from the most holy place. Use fine linen woven with blue, purple, and red wool, and embroidered with figures of winged creatures. Cover four acacia wood posts with gold and set them each on a silver stand. Then fasten gold hooks to the posts and hang the curtain there."*

Since the veil was made of fine linen, it represents the holiness and righteousness of Christ Himself. The veil was to be tricoloured – blue, purple and scarlet which all point to Christ (blue = Deity, purple = Royalty and scarlet = Sacrifice) with Cherubim embroidered onto it. The Cherubim are widely regarded to be guardians of the holiness of YHWH. These winged creatures were not on the entrance to the outer court or the veil between the Holy Place and outer court, only on the veil between the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place. They were also embroidered on the inner roof of the Tabernacle so they could be seen by the Priests ministering in the Holy Place.

The Holy of Holies was where God's Throne was and the veil shut out everyone except the High Priest on the Day of Atonement when he was permitted to enter with the blood of a goat and a bull to sprinkle on the mercy seat. In Hebrews 10.20, this veil speaks of Christ's flesh by which He made access to God available to all *"by a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;"*

The reason for this barrier concerns the significance of the Ark and its contents. The Ark represented the God-man Jesus Christ since it was made of acacia wood (man) and overlaid with gold (God). Inside the Ark were two stone tablets containing the Law which testified to the unbroken standards of God's holiness. To meet God, one had to meet these exacting, never changing standards from birth to death – a feat accomplished only by the Lord Jesus Christ in His humanity. But the Ark was covered with a mercy seat of pure gold, revealing to mankind that God would be merciful if man came to God via the prescribed way.

## **The Significance of the Veil**

As we have already seen, the veil keeps men out of the presence of God except the High Priest who was permitted to enter just once per year and even then under threat of death: *And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat* (Lev 16.2).

The key to understanding the significance of the veil is to realise that it points to the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, perfectly sinless in His humanity as He took on Himself human flesh (John 1.14). Jesus thereby represented to man the perfect holiness of God.

Note carefully the following attributes of God suggested by the veil:

- He was without sin (1 John 3.5)
- He modelled the standard one must attain if he expects to meet God

The situation is, of course, completely hopeless as we consider our lives in the flesh. But God in His mercy sent His only Son to meet the righteous demands of the Law in His humanity and then accomplish redemption for all men by the sacrifice of His sinless body: *"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons"* (Gal 4.4-5).

Paul speaks eloquently to those who believe they are righteous enough to meet God on their own terms: *"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin"* (Rom 3.19-20).

The veil was upheld by four pillars of acacia wood covered by pure gold (Exod 26.32). These four pillars are generally held to represent the four gospel accounts of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whereas the veil displayed the holy beauty of the God-man, the four pillars pointed to the four gospels that revealed and upheld the glories of this sinless, perfect man.



## The Torn Veil

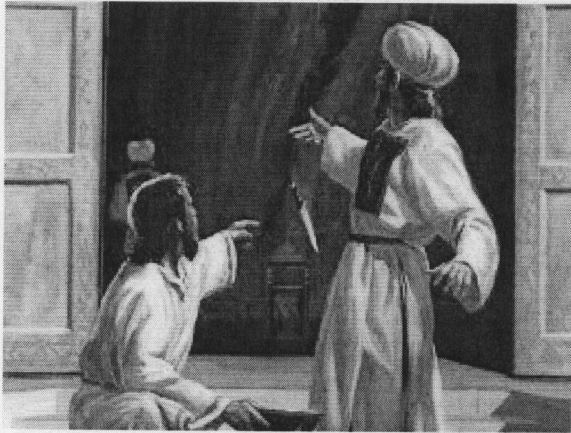


Fig 8.2 God tears the veil from top to bottom

After revealing God's perfect character in His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus Christ presented Himself as the sacrifice for sins to suffer the penalty of the Law for all mankind – past, present and yet to be born. At the point when Christ completed His work of redemption on the cross, Matthew tells us that the veil separating the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place was ripped from top to bottom (Matt 27.51).

This action was fully of God. Christ completely satisfied the righteous demands of the Law and God was propitiated (I John 2.1-2) and man was reconciled to God making it possible for God to be "just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus" (Rom 3.26). As for Christ, the bible tells us: "When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb 1.3). Sin was put away in the sacrifice of Christ, and the perfect righteousness of God is now available to all who believe, evidenced by the tearing of the veil that had separated sinful man from a holy God.

Notice that the veil was not simply breached, it was torn completely into two halves making access to the Holy of Holies fully available to all comers. That which was once an impenetrable barrier became a gateway. God now looks on every believer as being as perfect as His Son was. This is because He sees us only as we are in Christ; the sin question has been forever settled and we are now clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ. The sacrifices of the Old Testament covered sin but could not take it away. However, Jesus Christ, God's perfect Paschal (passover) Lamb did so by His death on the cross: "For by one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified (Heb 10.14). The privilege that is now ours is described in Hebrews 10.19-20: "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."

Jesus has opened the way to salvation and fellowship with God. History tells us that the Priests tried to mend the veil. So, also, men through all the ages have been devising their own ways of salvation rather than admitting their guilt and coming by faith to Christ. Concerning salvation, the bible is absolutely plain; "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3.5).