

What is the significance of

The Tearing of the
Curtain
in the Temple

What does it mean for
you and me today?

Leslie Rendell

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Tearing of the Curtain

The temple that stood in Jerusalem in the days Jesus Christ was on the earth was a magnificent building. According to the book of John chapter 2 verse 20, it took the Jewish people 46 years to build. When Jesus turned the tables of the money changers over in the temple courts, the Jews demanded to know by what authority Jesus had to do this. Jesus answered them as we see in John 2 verse 18-21.

Joh 2:18 The Jews therefore answered him, "What sign do you show us, seeing that you do these things?"

Joh 2:19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

Joh 2:20 The Jews therefore said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple! Will you raise it up in three days?"

Joh 2:21 But he spoke of the temple of his body.

The Jewish temple was divided into several parts, and each had a particular purpose in the worshipping of God. The innermost room was called the "Holy of Holies" and was the room where God's presence was in the temple.

Only the High Priest could enter the "Holy of Holies", and then only once a year on the "Day Of Atonement", to atone for the sins of Israel. To enter this part of the temple at any other time of the year, or by any other person, was a sure

death sentence.

This room, the holy of holies, was separated from the rest of the temple by a massive curtain or veil. The exact sized of the curtain is not known, but according to Jewish tradition, the curtain was about 60 feet high. It was very thick with a thickness of about 4 inches.

So it was a massive curtain. The book of Exodus informs us how it was made. They made it from blue, purple and scarlet materials along with twisted linen.

The veil represents the separation of a Holy God from sinful humanity because our sins have separated us from God as we see in Isa 59 verses 1 and 2.

Isa 59:1 Behold, Yahweh's hand is not shortened, that it can't save; nor his ear dull, that it can't hear.

Isa 59:2 But your iniquities have separated you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

As we can see from verse two, our sins have separated us from God. He designed the temple in a way to keep us separated from himself. This was the purpose of the curtain or veil.

It is well worth reading the rest of Isaiah 59 to see why the curtain was in place to make a dividing line between God (holiness) and humanity (sinfulness).

The Significance.

The very moment Jesus died on the cross, this massive curtain in the Temple was torn in half from the top to the bottom as recorded for us in Matthew 27 verses 50 and 51.

Mat 27:50 Jesus cried again with a loud voice, and yielded up his spirit.

Mat 27:51 Behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom. The earth quaked and the rocks were split.

The height and thickness of this veil makes what happened when Jesus died on the cross even more remarkable. From verse 51, we see the curtain was torn from the top to the bottom. This would have required a massive amount of energy to tear such an enormous curtain in two. It is also interesting to note that it was torn from the top to the bottom. Signifying that it was God the Father himself who tore this massive curtain.

This was a very dramatic sign that showed us that this incredible sacrifice of Jesus was sufficient atonement for the sins of all humanity. The shedding of His blood paid for our sins and freed us from the death penalty. This opened the way into the “Holy of Holies” where the presence of God resided.

Before this amazing sacrifice of Jesus, only the high priest could enter this part of the Temple, and then only on one day of the year. What this did for us was amazing. It gave us the right to come before the “Throne of Grace” without fear. To actually approach Almighty God with our prayers and requests.

Now the way into the holy of holies has been opened for all people and for all time for both the Jews and the Gentiles. God also abandoned the temple and no longer lives in a dwelling made by human hands. God was now finished with the temple in Jerusalem and it was finally destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70.

We read in Act 17:24 The God who made the world and all things in it, he, being Lord of heaven and earth, doesn't dwell in temples made with hands,

The temple needed to be removed because as long as it stood, the old covenant would continue with its sacrifices. The old covenant had to make way for the new covenant to be fully established, as Hebrews 8 verse 13 shows.

Heb 8:13 In that he says, “A new covenant”, he has made the first old. But that which is becoming old and grows aged is near to vanishing away.

This is made even clearer in Hebrews 9 verses 8 and 9.

Heb 9:8 The Holy Spirit is indicating this, that the way into the Holy Place wasn't yet revealed while the first tabernacle was still standing;

Heb 9:9 which is a symbol of the present age, where gifts and sacrifices are offered that are incapable, concerning the conscience, of making the worshiper perfect;

The temple is no longer needed. We are now permitted to enter the very presence of God through this torn curtain. The writer of the book of Hebrews describes this beautifully in Hebrews 10 and verses 19 to 23.

Heb 10:19 Having therefore, brothers, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus,

Heb 10:20 by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

Heb 10:21 and having a great priest over God's house,

Heb 10:22 let's draw near with a true heart in fullness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and having our body washed with pure water,

Heb 10:23 let's hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering; for he who promised is faithful.

The veil in the temple was a constant reminder to us that sin has no place in the presence of God. No amount of animal sacrifices could truly atone for the sins of mankind. But Jesus Christ, through his death on the cross, has now removed all barriers between God and man. We may now approach the throne of grace with boldness and confidence as revealed to us in Hebrews 4 and verse 16.

Heb 4:16 Let's therefore draw near with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace for help in time of need.

We no longer need the services of a human high priest or animal sacrifices for our forgiveness. Now we have our Lord Jesus Christ in Heaven. The only one who can intercede for us with our Heavenly Father as recorded in Hebrews 7 verse 25.

Heb 7:25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

The death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ paid for our sins. The tearing of the curtain made it possible for all humankind to approach God. And as we can plainly see in 1Ti 2:5, Jesus is the only mediator between us and God.

1Ti 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

Many people today still rely on a priest to confess their sins to. This is no longer necessary. Understand 1Ti 2:5 and see there is only one mediator between God and man, and that is Jesus Christ. No-one else can intercede for us. Absolutely no one else, not Moses, no saint, no angel, no man and definitely no woman has the authority to intercede between God and mankind. This prerogative has been reserved for Jesus Christ and for him alone.

Thank you for reading this book and may our most gracious God bless you and your family.

About The Author

Leslie Rendell has always believed in the existence of Almighty God. But it is only in the last 34 years that he has become more dedicated to researching the Holy Bible to find answers to his own questions.

We all have our own personal question to ask as we wonder why things are a certain way in our lives, and in the lives of other people as well. Leslie has always relied only on the Bible for his answers to religious questions because this is the only place one can expect to find the truth. The thoughts and teachings of any man, church, or religion, mean nothing to him.

If there is a conflict between what man claims to be right, and what God has had recorded in his holy scriptures, then the word of God will always be regarded as correct. The traditions of man, no matter who he is, will never be seen as more important, or more authoritative than the words in the Bible.

This is the way Leslie has always written, and will continue to write, as he seeks to find answers to his own questions that will hopefully also help to answer questions other Christians, and Non-Christians, may have.

TO GOD BE THE GLORY