

WITHIN THE VEIL

Mark 15:38 And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. (Reading, Mk. 15:29-38)

The preaching of the cross is the centrepiece of the Christian Gospel. Oswald Chambers rightly said, "Every doctrine that is not embedded in the cross of Jesus will lead astray". It is the subject, as Luther said, which "runs through the whole of Scripture" ... And whatever text we come to consider, we always must begin at the cross. If the cross is not included, and if it is not part of our examination, we are not meeting the standard, as Paul wrote when he addressed the church in Corinth, **1 Cor. 2:1** *And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. ² For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* ... That is at the core of everything we believe. Spurgeon preached a sermon in which he told his congregation we must preach Christ crucified boldly, lovingly, only, simply, and savingly.

Let me take you to the cross of Calvary. Just before nine o'clock in the morning there were two pieces of wood lying on the ground. They were nailed together. The Man Who was about to be bound to this cross had spent all night knowing He was to be taken out to the place of execution early the next morning. He was made to lie down at the feet of the Roman soldiers ... to lie down upon the cross ... the planks of wood 'digging' into His back, His spine. One by one the nails were set in the centre of His hands. At first He would feel the piercing roughness of the jagged point ... and then the terrifying agony as the soldier lifted the hammer and brought it down on those nails as hard and with as much violence as he could ... into the hands of Jesus. The indescribable pain!

The agony shot through every part of His perfect body ... There was absolutely no pomp, no romanticism, no ceremony as they banged those nails into the Saviour. There was nothing to alleviate His pain. There was nothing to dull the sufferings of Jesus.

There was no choir singing their anthem ... There were no crowds in support ... but there was clergy there that day dressed in all their finery so everyone would know who they were. They stood mocking Him, wagging their heads as if He was the greatest fool that lived. What a roar would have gone up from them when He cried out in pain as the first nail was driven through His hand! These were the Pharisees and chief priests, - the religious men, - the bishops and archbishops and cardinals of their day, the priests and the ministers who rejected the Sonship of Christ. **He saved others; himself he cannot save**, - that was their judgement of Him! ... They condemned Him to the most agonising death.

When the soldiers had finished hammering the nails into His hands they lifted that cross and dropped it into the hole in the ground, into which many crosses previously had been dropped. Jesus cried, - the Bible tells us, - *Jesus cried*, not as a little baby, not as a whimpering defeatist, but Jesus cried ... as the Saviour, **My God ... why hast thou forsaken me?** His cry was one of much more than pain ... for it was also of great grief ... rejected by His people, rejected by His disciples, ... most of all, rejected by His Father.

As He hung on the cross, His pain was so unbearable ... someone brought a sponge ... but those wicked *clergy* denied Him any relief, **Let alone; let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.**

From the third hour (v.25) until the ninth hour (v.34) the Lord Jesus Christ hung in torment and anguish on the cross of Calvary. As the priests and the people mocked Him He cried one last time with such a resonance everyone heard ... and He died *alone* the sinner's death ... for the undeserving sinner.

Immediately the attention of the Gospel writer was taken from that cross on the hill to inside the city walls of Jerusalem, into the temple, - right into the centre of the Temple ... into the Holy of Holies ... **v. 38 And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.**

THE VEIL OF THE TEMPLE, - WHAT IT SIGNIFIED

This was the part of the temple that signified entrance into the immediate holiness of God was restricted. The veil was a warning to proceed no further. It was a notice to "Keep out!" ... Behind the veil was the *shekinah* presence of Jehovah God, and none was to enter!

This temple was built upon the site of Solomon's temple. It was the holiest place in Judaism. There was none other like it. God's glory dwelt there! ... Well over a thousand years earlier, after the children of Israel had journeyed from Egypt through the wilderness, they rejoiced when they saw the oasis town of Jericho, from where they battled northwards until Jerusalem became their capital.

It was there that King David was given the promise a temple would be built ... and his son, - King Solomon, - would have the privilege of building it. With the most intricate planning and materials it was completed and received the seal of God's approval.

When, as a judgment upon the people of Israel, it was destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, the people of Israel were devastated because the temple and the city were left in ruins. Seventy years later, they were allowed to return to Jerusalem, and the temple was rebuilt under Zerubbabel. ... It was much

smaller than Solomon's temple, and less ornate ... but there was one *major* difference, as Jeremiah had previously prophesied, the ark of the covenant was never replaced, 3:16 And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the LORD, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more. ... That is where it was lacking ... Josephus, the Jewish historian, recorded the holy of holies was empty. It was now separated from the holy place by a veil instead of a door.

And then Herod the Great saw his opportunity to curry favour with the people and he restored Zerubbabel's temple into a magnificent building ... and that was the place Jesus worshipped in. It is not there today, of course, for it was destroyed in 70 AD by the Romans ... its ruins lie scattered as a constant memorial.

But this most grand of structures was where Jesus walked up the steps and entered through the Golden Gate ... into the *sacred enclosure*, through the *court of the Gentiles*, on past the *court of the women* and into the *court of Israel* where all the Jewish men would gather. ... Next, up a few steps and into the *Court of the Priests*, and to the *Holy Place*. There you would find the *Table of Shewbread* on your right-hand side. Up a piece and you will see the *Golden Altar* and over to your left was the seven *golden candlesticks*, the *Menorah*. ...

Then, in front of you was the *veil* that came from the roof down to the floor. On the other side of that *veil*, - beyond where you were allowed to enter, - was the *Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies)*. That is where God dwelt among His people ... That was where the High Priest was permitted to enter but once a year, - on the Day of Atonement. ... That *veil* kept everyone out because it was too holy to enter!

None dare touch that *veil* for even to touch it was to provoke the wrath of God. Contact meant sudden death! ... They say that a rope was tied round the High Priest's ankle when he entered it on the Day of Atonement ... for if anything happened to him, - for example, if he fainted or went unconscious, - none dare go in to retrieve him ... It was forbidden territory, under no circumstances! ... None had the authority to enter through the *veil* to the other side. ... That *Most Holy Place* was where God dwelt in perfect holiness among His people.

The veil of the temple, - what it signified ... was that *entrance into the Holy place was denied* to all but one, once a year.

THE VEIL OF THE TEMPLE WAS RENT IN TWAIN, - WHAT IT SIGNIFIED

The *veil* of the temple was like a sign to the priests, - "Come no further!" ... But, the very moment the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross of Calvary, - the very

moment He closed His eyes, the very instant He breathed His final breath, - the *veil* in the *Most Holy Place* was rent in two! Matthew and Mark tell us, **Mt. 27:51 ... Mk. 15:38** *the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.*

... They tell us specifically how it was torn ... Not from the bottom to the top, - it wasn't the high priest or the priests 'rent it in twain'. It was torn through no human effort ... It wasn't torn from the bottom to the top. Instead, *the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.* ... When Jesus died, His Father tore in two the veil which formerly separated sinful men from His presence, - He tore it from the top. None but Him could have reached up so high. If any others had touched it, they would have died ... but the moment Jesus died, His Father *rent in twain [the veil] from the top to the bottom.*

The obstacle into His presence had been removed *forever* ... and through the death of the Lord Jesus the means of entrance was now open and available to all. The writer to the Hebrews wrote, **Heb. 10:19** *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh ...* And Paul wrote to the Corinthians about how the *veil is done away in Christ (II Cor. 3:14).*

When the curtain was torn from the top to the bottom, the words of Jesus made His Heavenly Father freely available, **Jn. 10:9** *I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved ...* The cross demolished the barrier ... and grace restored the relationship.

The veil of the temple was rent in twain, - what it signified ... was that *entrance into the Holy place was open forever.*

THE VEIL OF THE TEMPLE WAS RENT IN TWAIN FROM THE TOP TO THE BOTTOM, - WHAT IT SIGNIFIED

What it signifies is simply this: there is no other means into the presence of God but through the Lord Jesus Christ. His work was thorough, absolute, finished, complete. Entrance is but by one means only ... The veil was rent from top to bottom ... For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son ... God's salvation began in Heaven, and the tearing of the veil began where only He could reach ... and it brought Him the whole way down to this earth. ... And it means salvation does not begin with us ... It means salvation is all of God ... It means you can only come to Him in the way which He has provided, through His Son. ... "No other way, no other way, No other way to get to Heaven, *Jesus* is the only Way!"

If you want to come before God, you have to abandon your sin at the foot of the cross, - He won't accept you otherwise. It is either sin or the Saviour ... To be

saved, you cast your sin at the foot of the cross, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ,

There's a way back to God from the dark paths of sin;
There's a door that is open and you may go in.
At Calvary's cross is where you begin,
when you come as a sinner to Jesus.

Previously the veil would have kept me out ... but when He died on the cross, the veil was torn from top to bottom, - He did what we could not do ... and now we can enter confidently through the *veil*, to the Holy of Holies, through the precious shed blood of my Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ ... and be accepted in the Beloved ... *the veil of the temple [that] was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.*

Within the veil I now would come,
Into the holy place to look upon Thy face.
I see such beauty there, - no other can compare,
I worship Thee, my Lord, within the veil.