

## **Awesome Events at the Moment of Christ's Death...**

**Matthew 27:51a "At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom."**

The word temple is speaking of the holy of holies, and the holy of holies had a barrier so that no one could go in.

The word "veil" in Hebrew means a screen, divider or separator that hides. What was this curtain hiding? Essentially, it was shielding a holy God from sinful man. Whoever entered into the Holy of Holies was entering the very presence of God.

In fact, anyone except the high priest who entered the Holy of Holies would die. Even the high priest, God's chosen mediator with His people, could only pass through the veil and enter once a year, on the Day of Atonement: He had to wash himself, put on special clothing, bring burning incense to let the smoke cover his eyes from a direct view of God, and bring blood with him from the sacrificed animals, to make atonement for his own, and then Israel's, sins.

**Hebrews 9:1**, "Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary." **7**, "But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance." **22**, "In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."

**Hebrews 10:3-12**, "But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: 'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for Me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, "Here I am—it is written about Me in the scroll— I have come to do your will, O God." First he said, 'Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them' (although the law required them to be made). Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God."

**Hebrews 9:11-12**, "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." **15**, "For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." **27-28**, "And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him."

The veil served as a barrier between man and God, to make sure that man did not carelessly, inadvertently or irreverently enter into God's presence. So the presence of God remained shielded from man behind a thick curtain during the history of Israel. There was a hierarchy of allocation in reference to how close a

person could actually get to the Holy of Holies: High Priest, Priests, Jewish Men, Jewish Women, Gentiles.

Jesus' sovereign and sacrificial death changed all that (Gal 3:26-29). When He died, the curtain in the Jerusalem temple was torn in half, from top to bottom by God (The Jerusalem temple, a replica of the wilderness tabernacle, had a curtain that was about 60 feet in height, 30 feet in width and at least four inches thick).

At the death of His Son, the Father ripped this curtain top to bottom, and the holy of holies was open to all, at 3:00 PM, on Passover, the temple jammed with people; the holy of holies, never seen except by the Priest on the Day of Atonement, was now completely exposed. No more high priest only, no more sprinkling of blood. No more barrier between God and man (cf. **John 14:6**).

**Hebrews 4:16**, "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

**1Peter 3:18**, "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God."

We can now enter into God's presence (**Hebrews 10:19-22**), "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body ...let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith."

In less than one generation (AD 70), the Temple was destroyed, the sacrifices ceased, and the Temple has never been rebuilt.

What do you think the Father was saying by ripping the curtain open? All may enter? Everyone may come into My presence (cf. **Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13**). Christ is the great high priest and He did what no priest of Israel could ever do. He took away the curse of sin, opening the veil, the doorway to God.

**Matthew 27:51b**, "the earth shook and the rocks split."

I believe God gave people a small preview of what is going to come to those who reject Christ. When God appeared to Moses on Mt. Sinai (**Exodus 19:18**), "the whole mountain quaked violently," and to Elijah (**1Kings 19:11**), "the mountains shook and the rocks broke into pieces." David, Jeremiah, Isaiah all spoke of God's wrath coming upon the earth to punish the disobedient.

God provides a taste here of His coming judgment, Jesus told them there will be earthquakes in the end time; in fact, one day in the future, God is going to shake the whole earth with massive earthquakes, the likes of which no one has ever seen (cf. **Revelation 6:12-17; 11:11-13**). The writer of Hebrews speaks to a final shaking of the earth (cf. **Hebrews 12:25-29; 2Peter 3:10**).

**Matthew 27:52-53**, "the tombs were opened, and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life and were coming out of the tombs. And after Jesus' resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many people."

After the curtain (veil) was torn in two, the earth shakes and rocks split, then certain Old Covenant believers who had died were resurrected; some of them no doubt had been dead for hundreds of years.

The spirits of selected OT believers were joined with their glorified bodies and they came out of the graves. This was a foretaste of God's sovereign work of resurrection power, giving a brief preview of what will happen in the end times.

The Bible teaches two kinds of resurrection (**Acts 24:15**);

**1) The righteous** - those raised to life, i.e., the "resurrection of the righteous" (**Luke 14:14**), "those who are Christ's at His coming" (**1Corinthians 15:23**), "the better resurrection" (**Hebrews 11:35**); it includes the redeemed of the Church age (1Th 4:13-18), the OT redeemed (**Daniel 12:2**), and the redeemed who died during the Tribulation (**Revelation 20:4**).

**2) The wicked** - those raised to judgment (cf. **John 5:29**; cf. **Daniel 12:2**); unbelievers are resurrected to stand before the Great White Throne after the millennial period (cf. **Revelation 20:4-15**).

Notice (**Matthew 27:53**), these resurrected saints don't go into Jerusalem until after Jesus' resurrection, because (**1Corinthians 15:20**), "Jesus is the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep (died)." All others must follow Him, as He is the first (**1Corinthians 15:21-22**), "For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive."

On the cross Jesus said, "It is finished!" The throne room of heaven was eternally opened to all who come by faith in Jesus Christ (see **1Corinthians 15:54-57**).

Just as God's judgment will come on all who reject His Son, God promised resurrection will come to those who believe in Him. Matthew's account of Christ's death closes (**Matthew 27:54**), "When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and that happened, they were terrified and exclaimed, 'Surely He was the Son of God!'"

God's testimony concerning His Son was clearly seen in the miracles that accompanied His death: Total Darkness at high noon (cf. **Matthew 27:45**), the Son separated from the Father (cf. **Matthew 27:46**), Jesus gave up His own life (cf. **Matthew 27:50**), the veil to the Holy of Holies ripped open from top to bottom, accompanied by an earthquake, a sign of God's judgment on unbelief (cf. **Matthew 27:51**), then OT believers who had died under the Old Covenant, were briefly brought back in their glorified bodies (cf. **Matthew 27:52-53**).

Here are Biblical passages citing Christ's appearances after His resurrection.

1. Mary Magdalene at the tomb (cf. **Mark 16:9**)
2. Other women on the way to the disciples (cf. **Matthew 28:9-10**)
3. The disciples walking to Emmaus (cf. **Luke 24:13-32**).
4. Peter (cf. **Luke 24:34**).
5. 10 of the disciples, Thomas absent (cf. **John 20:19-25**).
6. 11 disciples, Thomas present (cf. **John 20:26-31**).
7. 7 disciples by the Sea of Galilee (cf. **John 21:1-14**).
8. 500+ disciples on a mountain (cf. **1Corinthians 15:3-6**).
9. James (cf. **1Corinthians 15:7**).
10. The apostles at His ascension (cf. **Acts 1:3-11**).
11. Paul, after His ascension (cf. **1Corinthians 15:8**; **Acts 9:1-22**).

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