

#1 Matthew 27:50-51 “The Veil Of The Temple Is Torn”

#2 ⁵⁰ And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice (*“It is Finished” John 19:30*), He gave up His spirit. ⁵¹ At that moment **the veil (“curtain”) of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.** NIV

“the veil of the temple” Why did Matthew include this fact in his account? What is he referring to? To understand, we need to look back to the OT for a few minutes.

#3 In the Book of Exodus it is recorded that after the children of Israel left Egypt and were camped at the foot of Mt. Sinai; God gave Moses the law including the Ten Commandments – both the “civil” law (regulating how they treated each other), and ***the laws concerning worship – how they would worship God.*** The laws about worship were important because they spelled out what God required in order for His presence to live among them as they made their journey to the Promise Land.

Part of the requirements was the construction of a place of worship and a special tent the LORD (YHWH) to dwell in. #4 It actually WAS a tent (**“The Tabernacle”**) surrounded by a fence that could be taken down and moved as they moved through the wilderness. The LORD showed Moses the plans for the structure by showing him a scene in heaven as a pattern and then gave him the exact dimensions, so it could be built “to spec”. #5 **Exodus 25:8–9 (NIV84)** “Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. ⁹ Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.

#6 The curtained fence created an enclosure 75’ X 150’ and the Tabernacle was set to the back of the enclosure. As you

walked west through the only gate, which faced east, **#6a** you saw first an altar, where the daily animal sacrifices were made. **#7 Animal sacrifices were necessary to atone (“cover over”) the sins of the people. Why animal sacrifices?**

Sin is the breaking of God’s laws, in essence failing to live up to His Holy standards. We humans like to compare down (to others who are “worse” than we are) but God compares “up” – to His own holy perfection. This means in the sight of God all human beings are criminals and thus a separation exists with The Holy “Judge”. **#8 Isaiah 59:2–3 (NIV84) But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you...”**

In addition, The Judge has declared that the penalty for violating His Law is death. **#9 Ezekiel 18:4 (NKJV) “...The soul who sins shall die.” #9a Romans 6:23 (NKJV) “For the wages of sin is death...”**

Though the children of Israel were sinners like all other people; God in His mercy allowed them to sacrifice innocent animals (without blemish or defect) in their place as an atonement (“covering over”) for their sin. **#10 Leviticus 17:11 (NKJV) For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.’**

So the first “stop” in worship was a constant reminder of your failures as your lamb died in your place, so you could live and maintain a “relationship” with God!

#11 Behind that altar was a large bowl or “sea” of water for the priests to wash up in. Killing animals with a knife all day long was messy business. **#12** Behind the wash basin we get to the Tabernacle itself. **#13**

It's a relatively small tent 15' wide, 15' high and 45' long – divided into two rooms. **#14** As you walk through the only door you find yourself in a 30' long room called the “*Holy Place*”. On your left is a seven branched oil lamp which was kept burning 24/7. On your right is a low table with loaves of bread and directly in front is a small golden altar on which the priests burned incense every morning and evening, when they came in to refill the lamps with oil. So the priests (Aaron and his sons), but only the priests, had daily “duties” in the Holy Place)

#15 Looming up behind the altar of incense is a curtained wall (veil) embroidered with two large angels the Bible calls “cherubim”. **#16** They are not at all like the cute little “cherubs” on the Hallmark cards. These are large fierce warrior angels blocking your way to the inner room much like the ones blocking Adam’s way back into the Garden of Eden because he had sinned. **#17 Genesis 3:24 (NIV84)** After he drove the man out, he placed **on the east side of the Garden** of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

#18 The 15' cubed room behind the veil was called **the Holy of Holies** and inside was **the Ark of the Covenant**. **#19** On top of this gold covered wooden box (*Containing the original 10 commandments*) there was a solid gold lid with two raised cherubim, called **the MERCY SEAT** (“mercy” covering “the Law”). It is here between the cherubim that God’s presence was glowing night and day – His glory and power. **#20 Exodus 25:21–22 (NKJV)** You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you. ²² And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which *are* on the ark of the Testimony...”

The day the Tabernacle was finished and the LORD's presence entered this tent for the first time, the glory and power of God were overwhelming: **#21 Exodus 40:34–35 (NKJV)** Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁵ And **Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle** of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

#22 God spoke to Moses from The Holy of Holies much like He had from the burning bush for the rest of Moses' life, but no one else except Aaron and each subsequent High Priest was allowed inside this room, accept one day a year. They learned the strictness of this command in a tragic way. Aaron's sons had, in an emotional moment, rushed inside the Holy of Holies.

#23 Leviticus 10:1–3 (NIV84) Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. ² So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.

#24 #25 ³ Moses then said to Aaron, **"This is what the LORD spoke of when he said: *By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy...*"**

Later the LORD explained about the one day a year the High Priest was allowed to come into the Holy of Holies. (*We also get some insight into the death of his two sons.*) **#26 Leviticus 16:1–13**

(NASB95) Now the LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they had approached the presence of the LORD and died. ² The LORD said to Moses: "Tell your brother Aaron that he shall not enter at any time into the holy place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, or he will die; for I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat. ³

"Aaron shall enter the holy place with this...¹³ "He shall put the incense on the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on *the ark of the testimony*, otherwise he will die. ¹⁴ Then he

must take some of the blood of the bull, dip his finger in it, and sprinkle it on the east side of the mercy seat. #27 **There was an offer of mercy from God but not without the blood of a sacrifice!** *“Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness.” Heb. 9:22*

This day was called the Day of Atonement (***The Hebrew word means to cover over***), when Aaron and all future High Priests would bring the blood of a sacrifice and slowly come through the curtain and sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat to atone for sin. No one else was ever allowed into God’s presence. The closest that the average person could get was at the gate area of the courtyard when they brought their sacrifices for sin.

#28 So in OT times sin was a permanent roadblock to being near the LORD. The veil was a constant reminder that sinful people cannot have a relationship with a Holy God, unless their sin has been dealt with. #29 This practice of worship continued when Solomon and later #30 Herod build permanent temples in Jerusalem which were essentially copies of the tabernacle ***on steroids!*** Herod had increased the height to 40 cubits (60’), according to the writings of Josephus. **This put the height of the curtain that was torn at about 60 feet high.** Josephus also tells us that the veil was four inches thick and that horses tied to each side could not pull the veil apart; YET:

#31 When Jesus died that day on the cross; **“the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom”** by the hand of God.

This is significant for two reasons. The first is that the torn curtain revealed an “empty room”, in that the Presence of the LORD wasn’t there! ***There is no record of the cloud of glory in***

Herod's Temple, and the open curtain revealed that the Ark of the Covenant was not in the Holy of Holies!

#32 Where was the Ark (?) Around 930 BC, the Ark was put in the Temple in Jerusalem built by King Solomon. In 587 BC, the Babylonians captured Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple. At that point, the Ark disappears from history. **The Jews rebuilt the Temple about 70 years later, but there is no mention of the Ark in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, which describe the rebuilding of the Temple, and general opinion is that the Ark wasn't there or it would've been mentioned.** <http://www.straightdope.com/The-ark-of-the-covenant>

#33 When the Roman general Titus conquered Jerusalem in 70 AD we have a picture of the main trophies he returned with; **#33a** the golden lamp stand and **#33b** the table but no ark!

So the torn curtain revealed that the religious leaders had a form of religion; but God wasn't at the heart of it. **#34** This is much like people's faith today in our nation where nearly 80% of people call themselves Christian but don't live lives which give much if any evidence of God's presence. Instead: **#35 2 Timothy 3:1–5 (NIV84)** But mark this: **There will be terrible times in the last days. ² People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money...not lovers of the good...lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— ⁵ *having a form of godliness but denying its power.***

Does this possibly describe you? Do you know The LORD personally or do you have just enough religion to get you by so that others will consider you a good person? **Religion says man can practice certain spiritual disciplines at a distance from the Lord and somehow be good enough to get to heaven.** God says we can't make ourselves good enough and He came down to save us from our sins. Religion is your attempt to satisfy your conscience. God is not impressed by your religion because He

knows your heart! God will tear the curtain open someday and your empty religion will be exposed!

We must approach God on His terms and His provision of mercy comes only through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross for our sins. Jesus explained it another way: **#36 John 14:6 (NKJV)** “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

That is because, secondly and most importantly, the tearing of the veil signified that Jesus was successful at removing the barrier of sin between God and man. #37 This was the work Jesus came to accomplish and when He said *“It is finished”* He meant that His sacrifice for sin was completed.

Under the OT Law the sins were covered over (a picture of what was to come but not complete), but in the NT the word used for the “atonement: Jesus accomplished means to completely removed and forgotten. **#38 Hebrews 9:11–12 (NKJV)** But Christ came *as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.* ¹² Not with the blood of goats and calves, but *with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place* once for all, having obtained **eternal redemption.**

Moses built the original tabernacle after a pattern shown him by God on the mountain. The writer the Hebrews continues: **#39 Hebrews 9:24–26 (NLT)** For Christ did not enter into a holy place made with human hands, **which was only a copy of the true one in heaven.** He entered into heaven itself to appear now before God on our behalf...**But now, once for all time, He has appeared at the end of the age to remove sin by His own death as a sacrifice.**

The torn veil signified that day that God had accepted the sacrifice of His Son on the cross and that anyone calling on God for His mercy through Christ will be forgiven.

There is a picture given to us of the **true heavenly tabernacle** in the Book of Revelation (Ch. 4 & 5) – please turn in your Bibles.

#40 Revelation 4:1–8 (NKJV) After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard *was* like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.” ² Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, **a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.**

(Ark/mercy seat) ⁵ ...Seven lamps of fire *were* burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. **(Golden Lampstand)** ⁶ Before the throne *there was a sea of glass, like crystal* **(Laver or wash basin)**...⁸ The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!”

Revelation 5:1–5 (NKJV) And I saw in the right *hand* of Him who sat on the throne **a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.** ² Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?” ³ **And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it.** ⁴ So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. ⁵ But one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Behold, **the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.**” ⁶ And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, **stood a Lamb as though it had been slain** **(the sacrifice from the “brazen altar” (the cross) & “The Bread of life” – the table of showbread)**, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven

Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. ⁸ Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and **golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints (Golden altar of incense)**. ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood **(“It is Finished”)** Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, ¹⁰ And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.”

#41 “the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom...” #42 Hebrews 10:19–22 (NKJV) Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, *through the veil, that is, His flesh...* ²² **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**.