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Exodus: Delivered By God, For God / Veil of the Temple; Salvation; Sola Fide; Sola Gratia; Sola Scriptura; Soli Deo Gloria; Solus Christus / Exodus 26:31–37

The veil in the Tabernacle bars the way to the true presence of God, but Christ, has made a way so that we can be reconciled to God.

Introduction

It is with great precision and care that God has laid out in extensive detail the instructions for the building His tabernacle to Moses. Instructions that are given verbally and visually as God not only describes how His dwelling place is to be built but has also shown Moses what the finished product will look like. Since we were and are not privy to that visual presentation of the Tabernacle we have only the verbally directions provided to guide us into understanding God's purposes and intents in this work.

At the completion of the construction of the Tabernacle it served Israel for 400 years until the time of Solomon when the first temple was constructed in approximately 957 BC. After the construction of the first temple and the subsequent splitting of the nation by God as judgement for the sins of Solomon, the people of the nations of Israel and Judah went through cycles of obedience and disobedience. Ultimately the periods of disobedience led to God's use of the Babylonian Empire to not only the temple but ultimately the kingdom of Judah as a whole. This destruction took place around 587 BC and most of the people of God were taken into captivity by the Babylonians.

Eventually this Empire was overthrown and the people of God once again returned to the land, reconstructed Jerusalem and began the construction of the second temple after the 70 years they were in captivity. This temple in turn was to serve the people until its destruction, again along with the city of Jerusalem in the year 70 AD by the Roman Emperor Titus. During its many years of service this temple was remodeled and upgraded with the final upgrade being completed by Herod and the temple was later known as Herod's Temple.

At the center of all three of these structures lay what scripture identifies as the Holy of Holies, the resting place of the ark of the covenant and its lid the mercy seat. It is the ark and the mercy seat which formed God's throne and footstool as He dwelt among the people in the place between the winged cherubim atop the Mercy Seat. In the temple, the Holy of Holies was separated from the Holy place by a veil. Extra biblical texts describe this veil as being composed of over 2000 sq ft of fabric and requiring three hundred priests to clean when it had become unclean. Josephus described the veil as being the same size as the door, roughly 83' wide by 24' tall.

It is this veil that was described during the crucifixion as being "rent in two from the top down". It is this veil that served as the barrier, the preventative measure that held back the priest from entering the Holy of Holies, where the presence of the Most High was, until the proper time, and then only after the proper preparation. It is the instructions regarding the original veil that will hold our attention this morning for the next few minutes.

As a reminder we have walked through these instructions over the last few weeks diligently and as I have stated on more than one occasion we need to be reminded that the descriptions that are contained within the text are here for a purpose. For the Israelites, these instructions, along with the visual instructions received by Moses served to allow them to build the Tabernacle and then center their lives around the presence of God. For us, it is useful in that it continually reminds us of the person and work of Christ as we see the details in the instructions that point us to many aspects of Christ. Last week we saw the framework and foundation that was established for the Tabernacle and we were reminded that the framework and foundation for our lives is the very Word of God. This week, as I mentioned we are looking at the final two pieces, the veil and the door, and how each of these point again, towards Christ.

With that in mind, let us turn to our text for today found in Exodus 26:31-37

Text

Please rise for the reading of God's Holy, Infallible, Inerrant, Authoritative and Sufficient Word:

Exodus 26:31-37 LSB

"You shall make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet *material* and fine twisted linen; it shall be made with cherubim, the work of a skillful designer.

"You shall hang it on four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold, their hooks *also being of gold*, on four bases of silver.

"You shall hang up the veil under the clasps, and you shall bring in the ark of the testimony there within the veil; and the veil shall separate for you the holy place and the Holy of Holies.

"You shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the testimony in the Holy of Holies.

"You shall set the table outside the veil and the lampstand opposite the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south; and you shall put the table on the north side.

"You shall make a screen for the doorway of the tent of blue and purple and scarlet *material* and fine twisted linen, the work of a weaver.

"You shall make five pillars of acacia for the screen and overlay them with gold, their hooks *also being of gold*; and you shall cast five bases of bronze for them.

Father, grant us, through Thy spirit to help us rightly worship, forgetting the world and entering into your presence, the fullness of life that You give, and be refreshed, comforted and blessed. Grant us knowledge of Your goodness. Reveal for us through Your word, Christ, our Mediator, Brother, Interpreter, Branch, Lamb, that we may be drawn near with brotherly love and boldness. Remind us as we gather to worship that the veil has been torn and that we can enter the holiest place where we can receive in rich abundance the blessings that this day, the Lord's Day was designed to impart. Father may our hearts be guarded and protected against worldly thoughts or cares, our minds be filled with peace beyond comprehension, our meditations on Your word be sweet, our acts of worship filled with life and joy, that we would drink from the streams that flow from Your throne, our sustenance Your precious Word, our defence the shield of faith and our hearts be drawn closer to our blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Father we ask these things in that very blessed name, Amen.

The Doorway

As we begin today we will actually begin with the last item described for us in the text, the construction of the doorway. As you may recall from our discussion of the Tabernacle curtains in Exodus 26:1-6 and the tent curtains in verses 7-14 only formed three of the four sides of the Tabernacle. The fourth side is comprised completely of this door. Unlike the veil that separated the holy place from the Holy of Holies, the doorway screen is a woven mixture of the colors that were used on the curtain that formed the Tabernacle but without the Cherubim embroidered on it.

This doorway formed the fourth wall, which also happens to be the East wall, the wall towards where the sun would rise each day, where the night comes to an end and a new day dawns. After the fall of man and our subsequent expulsion from the Garden of Eden we read these words in Genesis 3:24 "So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life."

Because of the effects of sin in our lives, the place of true fellowship with God, where man had walked side by side with Him, was no longer accessible. What was once lost, and the way guarded, God was providing a way to once again regain, at least in part. The absence of the Cherubim on this wall shows, that by having their sins atoned for, the priestly family could once again, by virtue of the atonement, enter into dwelling place of God.

As we look at the Tabernacle, with the benefit of the fullness of God's plan revealed, we can see, represented by the colors that make up this doorway, that the one way to enter into the dwelling place of God is the Messiah, Jesus the Christ. Once again we see the four colors here that represent the totality of Christ, the blue, purple, scarlet and white. As we have discussed each of these colors represent different aspects of Christ, Pink is helpful in his description of these colors when he writes:

Gleanings in Exodus 3. Its Colours

The "blue" points to Christ as the Heavenly One, the Son of God; the "scarlet" refers to Him as the Son of man—suffering in the past, glorified on earth in a coming day. The "purple" speaks, distinctively, of the kingship of Christ, but also points to the wonderful union between His Deity and His

humanity. The mention of the "blue, and purple, and scarlet," is repeated no less than twenty-four times in connection with the Tabernacle's accessories and priesthood, yet never once is the order varied.

The entire purpose of the doorway was to permit access to the dwelling place of God, yet, that access did not come without a price. For the Levitical priests to enter through the doorway required that they be ceremonially cleaned and without this cleansing they were not permitted access. In our study of the book of Exodus we have spoken about how Moses was the mediator between God and man. That he stood for God in the presence of men and for men in the presence of God. We talked about how he was a type and shadow that points to a greater mediator that was to come, Paul writing to Timothy clarifies in 1 Timothy 2:5 "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," Our access is granted through the one Mediator Christ Jesus. Apart from His mediation our entry is forever denied. Anything that we do that is not done through our Mediator is seen in the eyes of the Father as nothing but filthy rags. Ephesians 5:20 demonstrates that even to give thanks, must be done in through the Son "always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;" Hebrews 13:15 shows that our sacrifice of praise, again, must come through this one doorway "Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess His name." 1 Peter 2:5 Peter again reiterates that our spiritual sacrifices are acceptable only through Jesus Christ "you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." Finally, Peter also reminds us in chapter 4:11 that the only way to truly glorify God is through Jesus Christ 1 Peter 4:11 "whoever speaks, as one speaking the oracles of God; whoever serves, as one serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and might forever and ever. Amen."

Deepening this truth for us, we find in the description of the Tabernacle that although the doorway permitted access to the dwelling place of God, the entrance into His presence was barred. Which brings our discussion around to the final curtain contained within the Tabernacle proper, the veil.

The Veil

Exodus 26:31-35 contain the description of the construction of the veil, where and how it was to hang, and then what was to be enclosed by it. The Hebrew word that is used here is different from the previous words that have been used to describe the curtains of the Tabernacle, this word comes from a root word which literally means "to bar" thus the veil itself was a barrier that prevented the priests from entering the Holy of Holies, except it be done in the manner in which God intended. We mentioned briefly these instructions as we looked at the Ark of the covenant, but they bare repeating in this discussion so that the fullness of the purpose of this veil can begin to be grasped.

In Leviticus 16 God details the procedures for the day of atonement. The one day out of the year that one man was permitted entry into the Holy of Holies, but only after completeing the steps precisely as they are written. Leviticus 16:1-17

Leviticus 16:1-17 LSB

Now Yahweh spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they came near the presence of Yahweh and died.

And Yahweh 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, so that he will not die; for I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat.

"Aaron shall enter the holy place with this: with a bull from the herd for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering.

"He shall put on the holy linen tunic, and the linen undergarments shall be next to his body, and he shall be girded with the linen sash and attired with the linen turban (these are holy garments). Then he shall bathe his body in water and put them on.

"And he shall take from the congregation of the sons of Israel two male goats for a sin offering and one ram for a burnt offering.

"Then Aaron shall bring near the bull for the sin offering which is for himself, that he may make atonement for himself and for his household.

"And he shall take the two goats and present them before Yahweh at the doorway of the tent of meeting.

"And Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats, one lot for Yahweh and the other lot for the scapegoat.

"Then Aaron shall bring near the goat on which the lot for Yahweh fell, and he shall offer it as a sin offering.

"But the goat on which the lot for the scapegoat fell shall be presented alive before Yahweh, to make atonement upon it, to send it out into the wilderness as the scapegoat.

"Then Aaron shall bring near the bull of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his household, and he shall slaughter the bull of the sin offering which is for himself.

"And he shall take a firepan full of coals of fire from upon the altar before Yahweh and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense, and bring *it* inside the veil.

"And he shall put the incense on the fire before Yahweh, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on *the ark of the testimony*, so that he will not die.

"Moreover, he shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle *it* with his finger on the mercy seat on the east *side*; also in front of the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times.

"Then he shall slaughter the goat of the sin offering which is for the people and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull. And he shall sprinkle it on the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat.

"So he shall make atonement for the holy place because of the uncleanness

of the sons of Israel and because of their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and thus he shall do for the tent of meeting which abides with them in the midst of their uncleanness.

“Now when he goes in to make atonement in the holy place, no one shall be in the tent of meeting until he comes out, that he may make atonement for himself and for his household and for all the assembly of Israel.

These instructions should help frame our thought process regarding the construction of the veil itself.

God begins by describing for us the material with which the veil is to be made. Again we see the colors that have been repeated throughout the Tabernacle, the colors that point us towards Christ. Like the curtain that formed the tabernacle itself, the veil also contained Cherubim, but there are a couple of differences in the description of this piece that sets it apart from the construction of the Tabernacle curtain. First, and most notably, is the order in which the text lists the colors, like we saw in the doorway they are listed blue, purple, scarlet and then the fine linen. From a study of the language it is believed that the description here meant that the colors were variegated together, meaning that there was not necessarily, as in the case of the tabernacle curtain, one primary color, but that all four were in equal parts. As in the case of the primary curtain the veil was to contain Cherubim, the symbol of divine judicial authority and guardianship, once again, Genesis 3:24 “So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.” should come to mind.

Beyond these instructions the final comment is that it should be the work of a “skillful designer”. This specific language is only used in a very limited capacity in the descriptions regarding the Tabernacle, specifically in relation to the Tabernacle curtains, the veil and the breastplate of the high priest. Our best translation truly falls short of the descriptive language of the Hebrews as this calls not only the skill of the human craftsman, but also the divine inspiration and instruction given to that craftsman to construct this piece.

The veil, once constructed, was to be hung by four pillars made, once again of acacia wood covered in gold with silver bases. The veil was to reach

from the floor of the tabernacle all the way to the top, completely blocking off the Holy of Holies. Once it was put into place, the ark of the testimony along with the mercy seat was to be situated behind it completely separated from the rest of the tabernacle and protecting the priests who entered and ministered there daily from certain death by being exposed to the presence of the Almighty.

Although the original veil would not remain in place until the time of Christ, there would always be a veil in the temple that separated the Holy of Holies and prevented true access to the presence of God, at least until the appointed time.

The Rending of the Veil

As a kid, I recall always enjoying the part of the Easter story where the veil was torn. While I certainly did not grasp the beauty of this truth, it still stood out to me as something amazingly wonderful. Today, I stand before you and that amazement has not dimmed, in fact, the deeper I understand this truth, the greater the amazement. In order to truly grasp we need to be reminded of a few truths and while this may again, seem repetitive, it is necessary. Scripture itself reminds us of the necessity in Romans 12:1–2 “Therefore I exhort you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice—living, holy, and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may approve what the will of God is, that which is good and pleasing and perfect.” The reminding and repetition of truths is what is referred to here as the renewing of your mind, and this is necessary because although we stand justified by and through Christ alone, we are still sinners as a result of the remaining flesh that we inhabit.

The first great truth that we need to be reminded of is that the Bible is revelation of God’s redemptive plan, designed to bring glory to Him and Him alone. Our very creation and purpose in existence is to “glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” To truly be able to glorify Him and enjoy Him, we need to be in His presence but by nature of the above mentioned sinful flesh, we cannot come into His presence, this is what the veil was all about, prevention into the presence of the Holy God. In Exodus 33:18-23 requests of God:

Exodus 33:18–23 LSB

Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!"

And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of Yahweh before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."

But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!"

Then Yahweh said, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand *there* on the rock;

and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by.

"Then I will remove My hand, and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen."

Notice that in verse 20 God tells Moses that no man can see His face (or His full glory) and live, why? Because in the full face of His glory and in all of His Holiness a righteous and just God would be left with no choice but to pass judgement and pay out the wages due by the sinful creature standing before Him. Adam was warned in the Garden if he disobeyed, he would surely die. We know from God's word that all have sinned, that all fall short, that none seek God and that ultimately and truthfully the full and final wages required of sinful man is death. It is revealed to us through the record of John's revelation that this full and final payment is the second death, Revelation 21:8 ""But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and sexually immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.""

Secondly, we need to be reminded that there is only ONE way. This not a new claim, we can see it in many places, but how poignant is it right here in our description of the tabernacle...notice, there is only one door, one entry point, but behind that entry point full access is still denied, except for by one veil, to one person on the one day, and this truth never waivers, the only difference, the access that was only foreshadowed by the veil is made

reality for us today. Pink is helpful as he writes:

Gleanings in Exodus 7. Its Rending

The whole ritual of Israel's worship emphasized the distance between God and the creature. Bounds were set about Sinai, so that not even a beast must touch it. One Tribe alone was permitted to encamp, immediately, around the Tabernacle: one family alone of that Tribe was singled out and allowed to enter the holy place: and one man alone of that family had access into the holiest, and that, only once a year, and with such awe-inspiring preparations and ceremonies as must have filled him with fear lest he should incur the judgment of the Most High

In the gospel of Matthew we read the following in Matthew 27:50–51 "And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. And behold, the veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split."

You may recall that earlier I said that the veil was approximately 24' tall and by many estimates was about 4" thick, yet the same hand that struck Christ on Calvary's cross, grasped the veil and rent it in two, from top to bottom. The way had been opened and access has been granted but the terms have not changed. The reason we need to keep in mind the ritual and sacrifices that were necessary for the high priest to atone for the sins of the people is not so that we can repeat these sacrifices but rather that we realize that apart from the shedding of blood there is no entry into the presence of God and that Christ, God in Flesh, the one who is truly God and truly Man, was that sacrifice. Hebrews clarifies for us in Hebrews 10:19–20 "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,"

We speak often of the necessity of being obedient to God, of living a Christ-like life, both of which are one hundred percent true and absolute, but these are only possible once we have been saved by grace, through faith, in Christ, according to His word, for the Glory of God. When we look at the veil, we see that beyond the shedding of blood, the sprinkling of that blood on the mercy seat to atone for the sin of the individual, one cannot stand in the presence of God, not then, not now. Note the words of Hebrews 10:19–20 again "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which

He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh," you see it wasn't the life of Christ that allows entry, one writer put it this way:

Gleanings in Exodus 3. Its Meaning

The Incarnation by itself (apart from the redemption which was the purpose and object of it) neither brings man to God, nor God to men. True, it was 'God with us' just as the Tabernacle was with men: but, when the symbol of God's presence was with men, man could not have access to it. The beautiful Veil was an effectual bar, and its one and only voice was 'Come not.' The life of Christ on earth was an unceasing proclamation of the fact that only His humanity was shone upon by and dwelt in the glory of God. The proclamation of His life ever was: 'Except ye be holy, sinless, spotless, perfect, as I am, ye cannot enter into the presence of God. It was not the object of the Veil to give access to God; for it was that which prevented it. Even so it was not the perfection of Christ's life on earth that brings us into the presence of God'

Apart from the full and complete payment made by Christ on Calvary's cross, there is no entry into the presence of God, and then only, when that sacrifice is applied to your life by grace, through faith.

Conclusion

From the very beginning, when Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden and the cherubim stood guard at the eastern gate, access to the presence of God was barred. The veil of the Tabernacle continued to remind God's people that sin separates, that holiness demands a price, and that entry into God's presence was not a matter of human effort but divine provision. For centuries, the veil stood as a barrier, a solemn declaration that man in his fallen state could not stand before a holy God.

But on that fateful day at Calvary, when Jesus yielded His spirit, God Himself tore the veil from top to bottom. The barrier was removed—not by human hands, not by religious efforts, but by the sovereign act of God. Christ, our great High Priest, did what no Levitical priest could ever do—He entered, not with the blood of goats and bulls, but with His own blood, securing eternal redemption for all who believe (Hebrews 9:12).

Yet, though the way has been opened, not all will enter. The entry is only through Christ. His life, His righteousness, His sacrifice—these are the only

means by which we may approach the throne of grace with confidence (Hebrews 10:19-20).

So now, the question is before you:

The veil has been torn—will you walk through?

Will you continue living as though the barrier remains, clinging to self-righteousness, religious ritual, or the fleeting securities of this world? Or will you, by faith, trust in Christ alone, entering into the presence of God through the only Mediator, the only Savior, the only Way?

The invitation is clear. The sacrifice has been made. The veil has been torn. The way is open.

Will you enter?