

Matthew 27:46-52 (Henry William Soltau) 93540

The Tabernacle, the Priesthood and the Offerings, Rent Vail, The

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Matthew 27:46-52; Mark 15:34-38; Luke 23:44-46

Each dispensation, as it succeeded that which went before, only the more shut up man in the hopelessness of his misery. It left him manifestly worse at the close, than it found him at its commencement. The Law and Prophets effected no deliverance; the former, instead of proving a remedy for sin, became its strength; the latter were slain and persecuted, and afterward their memory was honored by the children of those who had so used them, and who thought themselves better than their fathers. At length, in the fullness of the time, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law. The second man, the brightness of God's glory, appeared on earth. Still, nothing was effected. He came into the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own; and His own received Him not. The world, in the stupidity of its brutish ignorance, caused by sin, recognized not its Lord. Israel, still worse, conscious to some extent of His presence, willfully despised and rejected Him, treating Him with the scorn and derision, which devils dared not to offer.

"The Word, made flesh," dwelling among men, and going about ceaselessly doing good, was not the fullest manifestation of the love of God. Man himself felt rebuked by the presence of the Holy One, rather than attracted; he might, for a moment, be startled at the glory, beauty, and grace, manifested in Him whom the vail typified: but soon the contrast with himself made him hate the perfect One. The way into the immediate presence of God was not made manifest as long as the vail remained unrent. Two things had to be accomplished. God must declare His love after such a manner that the mouth of every gainsayer might be stopped, and man be left without excuse; besides which, a way of access must be prepared, so that the vilest sinner covered with all his filthiness, might, without one attempt at self-amendment, be welcomed to the presence and heart of the Father. To effect these objects, God counted nothing too costly. The Wonderful One for whom He had prepared a body, and whom He had sent into the world, whom he delighted to contemplate, and on whom His eternal love rested with unabated fullness and complacency, was bruised, and utterly marred in death. But who can tell the feelings of His heart. when, compelled by His love to us, He spared not His own Son? Or, who can tell the sufferings of that Son, when bruised by the hand, and pierced by the arrows, of the Almighty?

The following is the record, in three Gospels, of the rending of the Vail: Matt. 27:46-52. - "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias. And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink- The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom: and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened."

Mark 15:34-38—"And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias. And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone: let us see whether Elias will come to take him down. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. And the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom."

Luke 23:44-46—"And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the vail of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost."

Although it was the vail of the temple that was rent. yet it is to be remarked that in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where we have the explanation given what the vail typified, " that is to say, His flesh," reference is alone made to the tabernacle.

The temple embodied in its type, a dispensation beyond the present, and cannot be so exclusively used as a shadow of heavenly things, while the Church is passing through this world, like Israel in the wilderness. Throughout this epistle, no allusion is made to the existence of the temple, although in fact it was then standing: and the rending of the vail is made to have the same import as the passing away of the earthly tabernacle: (compare Heb. 9:3;8, with 10, 20.) It may also be observed, that the Ark was the only vessel of the Tabernacle, which was, as originally made, placed in the Temple, the other vessels being all fashioned anew; and the Vail was also the only hanging which preserved an analogy between the temple and the tabernacle. It seems to have been perpetuated in the temple, to the end that it might be thus significantly rent.

In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, as above quoted, the same expression is repeated, " rent in twain from the top to the bottom." The only type in which God Himself, represented by His own act, the great and most wonderful truth respecting the death of Christ, viz: that He, with His own hand, smote the Lord Jesus. Many are the allusions to this in the Old Testament Scriptures, " He that is hanged is the curse of God." (Deut. 21:23.) " THOU hast brought me into the dust of death." (Psa. 22:15.) "THINE arrows stick fast in me, and THINE hand presseth me sore." (Psa. 38:2.) "All THY waves and THY billows are gone over me." (Psa. 42:7.) " THOU hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness in the deeps. THY wrath lieth hard upon me, and THOU hast afflicted me with all THY waves. THY fierce wrath goeth over me; THY terrors have cut me off." (Psa. 88:6,7, 16.) "It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him: He hath put Him to grief." (Isa. 53:10.) "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith Jehovah of hosts; smite the Shepherd." (Zech. 13:7.) This was, to the Blessed Lord, the most terrible element in the cup of judgment which he drank. The grape was trodden in the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

The corn of wheat was bruised between the upper and nether millstone of His righteous indignation. The oil was beaten from the olive, under the heavy pressure of His hand. When the Lord was crucified, we behold all the powers of hell, earth, and heaven, arrayed against Him. He was lifted up between earth and heaven; the fountains of the great deep spouted up their billows From beneath, and the windows of heaven poured down the water-spouts of Divine vengeance from above.

In the death of Christ, we have marvelously combined Satan's power; man used as the instrument in killing the Prince of Life; God smiting Him; and yet no one took His life from Him. He laid it down of Himself, with the same power by which He took it again in resurrection; and this, in obedience to the command of His Father.

No human hand rent the veil in twain; neither was it torn from the bottom towards the top but a hand from above rent it from the top to the bottom. Access to the heaven of heavens was to be laid open; no love and no power could either have devised or accomplished this, but the love and power of God.

In the Gospel of Luke, the rending of the veil is mentioned as if it had occurred during the three hours of darkness, and before the Lord Jesus gave up the ghost. May it not be, that in accordance with the order of this Gospel, (which is rather a spiritual than a chronological order,) it is so inserted, to direct our thoughts to the fact, that during those hours of darkness, the hand of judgment from God lay in unmitigated weight on the soul of the Lamb of God? The period was one, during the whole of which, He was being rent from above.

In Luke, also, the expression " in the midst" is substituted for " from the top to the bottom." Here, another blessed feature is added to the truth typified by this act of God. The veil hung upon four pillars; and the ark was placed in the center of the holiest; so that, the veil being rent in the midst, from the top to the bottom, a way of approach was made directly to the very center of the mercy-seat, where, between the cherubim, the God of glory dwelt. It was not a side access, but the shortest and most direct that could be made, to the fore-front of the ark.

The rending of the veil made an entire change in the dispensation. Up to that time, the tabernacle and priesthood, connected with the law, stood in their integrity. Heb. 9:8 states, that as long as the first tabernacle was standing, the way into the holiest was not made manifest. Not that the tabernacle was actually standing when the veil was rent, but, as the Greek expresses it, it had yet a standing, or existence, dispensationally; for the first covenant, with which it was connected, had not waxed old and passed away. When however, the veil was rent, all the exclusive privileges which the law had established, were abolished; distinctions in the flesh were at an end: the first covenant, with its ministration of death, was forever superseded by the second, established upon the blood of Him whom the veil typified. The same hand that rent the beautiful fabric which hitherto had concealed the holiest of all, opened simultaneously the graves; one act of God laid open the way, even from the ruin and death caused by sin, up to the height of His own glory. Henceforth no human priest was needed to stand between the sinner and God. No steps of approach were prepared in order that, by slow degrees, the unclean might be gradually fitted to draw nigh. The way from the grave to the glory was but one step; by the blood, through the veil, the sinner, however guilty, however unclean, might at once with boldness take his place before the throne overshadowed by the Cherubim of Glory.

Creation also heaved in convulsive throes, for " the end of the world" had come: and all that was old, and which could be shaken, was to be removed, to make way for the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. True, this blessed consummation has not yet arrived: God still waits to be gracious; but the whole period which has elapsed since the death of the blessed Lord, has only been one of long-suffering: for, the Cross stood, in the counsels of God, at the end of all things; and the believer himself is able, by faith, to say, " If any man be in Christ, (to him there is) a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new: and all things are of God " (2 Cor. 5:17,18).

The veil of the tabernacle divided between the holy and the most holy places. (Ex. 26:33.) The sons of Aaron, the priests, ministered in the holy place: the congregation of Israel had no access into it. The high priest alone entered the most holy, and that only once a year. All believers in Christ are not only worshippers, like Israel, but priests. " Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father." Rev. 1:5,6.

The exhortation in Heb. 10:19, contemplates this priestly standing of believers; they have liberty to enter into the holy places (see original) through the rent veil, the new and living way, which Jesus has newly made. The passage beautifully expresses the two thoughts of life and newness, inseparably connected with this way, in contrast with the old covenant and its ceremonial observances of dead works, which never advanced the sinner a step nearer to God. Besides this, access is in the blood; because, not only is the way made, but the worshipper himself has a perfect priestly sanctification thereby, and is perfectly fit to draw near to God. The holiest, also, was thrown open; and though there can only be one Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Himself, yet believers, seeing they constitute the royal priesthood, have the same high-priestly standing, as regards their nearness of approach to God in the holiest.

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