

**CHRIST THE TABERNACLE**  
**LECTURE 8**  
**THE VEIL (EXODUS 26:31-33)**

**INTRODUCTION**

We have previously considered the various items of furniture in the Tabernacle together with their spiritual meaning. We gradually made our way from the outer court, into the inner court, through the Holy Place and into the Most Holy place. On our way we passed the Brazen Altar, the Laver, the Shewbread, the Golden Lamp, the Incense Altar, and finally and climactically the Ark of the Covenant. However, we would now like to retreat backwards a few steps and consider the veil or curtain which separated the Most Holy place from the Holy Place and was the second veil in the Tabernacle (Heb.9:3).

**I. IT CONCEALED**

This curtain had the effect of concealing the contents of the Most Holy Place. "And thou shalt put therein the ark of the testimony, and cover the ark with the veil" (Ex.40:3). This curtain was thick, substantial, durable, and impenetrable to the eye. As such, it was a symbol for the obscurity of the Mosaic era (Heb.9:8). Like the other biblical types and symbols, while the veil revealed, it also hid.

**Figures of the True**

The curtain was a type of Christ's human nature in his estate of humiliation. While the human nature revealed something of God, it also hid and concealed the glory of God so that few saw "through" to Christ's deity. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not" (Jn.1:10; Isa.53:2).

"The flesh or humanity of Christ, so long as it existed in the life of his humiliation, concealed the most excellent glory of the Godhead, nay, by its very holiness seemed to put this at a greater distance from mankind" (P Fairbairn).

***Without God's revealing work, we will not see the glory of Christ. We will be like the "world" which "knew him not". God hides things from the wise and prudent and reveals them unto babes (Mat.11:25). May we find ourselves among the babes.***

**II. IT PROHIBITED**

The curtain before the Most Holy Place was intended to be a physical barrier to the presence of God and reinforced the spoken and written barrier. The embroidered cherubim on the curtain, reminding the priests of the armed cherubim outside Eden, intensified this sense of "no entry". No one but the priests were allowed into the Holy place, and only the High Priest into the Most Holy Place (Heb.9:6,7).

**Figures of the True**

By his character, words, and deeds Christ emphasised the holy barrier between a holy God and sinful humanity. Even Peter at one point exclaimed, "Depart from me for I am a sinful man O Lord" (Lk.5:8).

***Have you ever been overwhelmed like this in the presence of the***

***holiness of Christ? Surely this is an experience to be both feared and yet also sought after from time to time.***

### **III. IT PERMITTED**

Although the curtain served to prohibit access to many, it also acted as a door of entry to those who were authorised by God. The High Priest was permitted access, though only once a year and only with sacrificial blood (Lev.16:2-3; Heb.9:7). Also, the fact that it was a curtain and not a wall hinted at the temporary nature of the limitation and the strong possibility of its eventual removal.

#### **Figures of the True**

God's elect saw through the human nature of Christ by faith. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (Jn.1:14). Flesh and blood did not reveal it to them but their heavenly Father (Matt.16:17). These relatively rare times when people saw through Christ's humiliated flesh to his heavenly glory hinted at a time of fuller and wider revelations of His glory.

***Thank God if you have ever been permitted to enter God's Most Holy Place and see the glory of Christ.***

### **IV. IT RIPPED**

#### **A. An act of God**

The priest could not enter the Most Holy Place by simply admiring the beautiful curtain and then passing through it. He had to sacrifice an animal and carry its sacrificial blood with him. Sacrificial blood was the only way in.

#### **Figures of the True**

There was no way into the presence of God by simply admiring the humanity of Christ. There had to be blood shed. There had to be a flaying and sacrificing of his human nature. When God did this on Calvary, when the human nature of Christ was "torn" by divine anger, the Temple equivalent of the Tabernacle curtain was torn in two, down the middle, and from top to bottom to signify the completeness and finality of the sacrifice (Matt.27:51).

***Salvation is an act of God not of man. The sacrifice is complete.***

#### **B. An act of mourning**

When Christ's humanity was torn by death on the cross it caused many to beat upon their breasts in an act of mourning (Lk.23:48).

#### **Figures of the True**

"It is not fanciful to regard it as a solemn act of mourning on the part of the house of the Lord. In the East men express their sorrow by rending their garments; and the temple, when it beheld its Master die, seemed struck with horror, and rent its veil. Shocked at the sin of man, indignant at the murder of its Lord, in its sympathy with Him who is the true temple of God, the outward symbol tore its holy vestment from the top to the bottom" (C Spurgeon).

***Have you wept and moured over what your sin did to Christ? Has your heart been ripped from top to bottom with repentance?***

### **C. A fatal wound**

The tearing of the holy curtain was a momentous event. It was a fatal wound inflicted by God Himself at the heart of Israel's national and religious life.

#### **Figures of the True**

God was sending the Jews a message that the whole system of typical sacrifices and ceremonies was now over. The curtain was not taken down and folded up so that it might be re-hung some time in the future. It was ripped so that it was beyond use. Nothing – no symbols, or types, or ceremonies – shall separate us ever again from the love of God (Rom.8:39).

***This fatal wound inflicted upon dead ritual has brought spiritual life to many. This knife to the heart of mere religion has brought joy to many needy sinners.***

### **D. A view of glory**

This top-to-bottom rip right down the middle of the curtain allowed many to see right into the Most Holy Place in the Temple for the first time. They saw the glory of God in an unprecedented way.

#### **Figures of the True**

Christ's human nature was "rent in twain from the top to the bottom", his body was separated from his soul in death. However, this tearing or ripping of Christ's human nature opened the way for many to see right into the Most Holy place and see the glory of God in an unprecedented way. As the centurion said, "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mk.15:38).

***If you want to view the glory of God, the cross of Christ is the "window".***

### **E. A drawing near**

The Mosaic dispensation was characterised by fear. When God gave the law, the people "removed and stood afar off" (Ex.20:18). "And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, **that he come not** at all times into the holy *place within the veil* before the mercy seat, which *is* upon the ark; **that he die not**: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat"(Lev.16:2).

When the High priest lifted the curtain and passed into the Most Holy Place once a year, the people stood outside with trepidation, waiting for his hoped-for return. Jewish tradition says that latterly the Jews attached a rope to the foot of the High Priest so that if he perished inside they might remove the body with minimal risk to themselves. The ripped curtain must have greatly diminished the fear of the Jews as what had previously been shrouded in dreadful and fearful mystery was exposed to the broad light of day.

#### **Figures of the True**

Instead of fear, hesitation, trepidation and distance, Christ's death enabled the writer to the Hebrews to say, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter

into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh (Heb.10:19-20).

***It is no longer, “Keep back!” but “Come to me”. It is no longer “Let us draw back” but “Let us draw near”. It is no longer an old way characterised by deathly fear but a “new and living” way which not only allows us to enter with safety but with boldness. It is a living way because the sacrifice which opened it still lives and also continues to give life to those who travel it.***

## **F. A widened road**

Instead of the High Priest alone lifting a corner of the curtain once every year and slipping in with blood and incense the access was now widened so that there was ample space for many more to enter.

### **Figures of the True**

Christ's death has opened a much wider way into God's presence. Charles Spurgeon said: "The rent is not in one corner, but in the midst, as Luke tells us. It is not a slight rent through which we may see a little; but it is rent from the top to the bottom. There is an entrance made for the greatest sinners. If there had only been a small hole cut through it, the lesser offenders might have crept through; but what an act of abounding mercy is this, that the veil is rent in the midst, and rent from top to bottom, so that the chief of sinners may find ample passage!"

When a new road is opened, there is often an opening ceremony when the road is set apart or dedicated for its designated use and someone significant inaugurates it by travelling it first. When Christ opened this new accessibility into God's presence he "consecrated" it with his blood and inaugurated it for us by travelling it first ahead of us. "Which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, *even* Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec (Heb.6:19).

***Are you travelling on this road? Are you following the great Forerunner?***