

## The NT Temple Veil

Speaking on Mat 27:51, Gill makes this point about the veil of the temple in Christ's day:

Ver. 51. "**And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain**", &c.] Just at the time that Christ spake with so loud a voice, and expired, and which was at the time of the offering up of the evening incense; and so must be seen by the priest that was then offering, and those that assisted him, for the incense altar was near the veil; and which must be a very astonishing sight unto them: the veil was of a very great thickness; it was made of fine twined linen, "#Ex 26:31", and it is a rule with the Jews {t}, that

``where ever mention is made in the law of fine linen, or fine twined linen, it means a thread six times doubled:"

and whereas this was made of blue, and purple, and scarlet, Jarchi's note on the place is, that

``every kind was doubled with each thread of six threads."

His sense is more clearly expressed in his note on "#Ex 26:1",

``lo! here are four sorts to every thread; one of linen, and three of wool, and every thread is six times doubled; behold four sorts when they are twisted together, make twenty four doubles to a thread."

Yea, some of them make it to be forty eight doubles {u}. What a thick piece of tapestry must this be! and this makes the rending of it the more amazing; for no doubt but that the veil of the second temple was made after the manner of the first; and this was rent

"**from top to bottom**"; and which was no less than forty cubits in length, which was the height of the holy of holies in the second temple; and which made the rent the more astonishing. The account the Jews give of the veil, is this {w}:

``R. Simeon ben Gamaliel said, on account of R. Simeon, the son of the Sagan, the thickness of the veil is an hand's breadth, and it is woven of seventy two threads, and every thread has twenty four threads in it: it is forty cubits long, and twenty broad, and is made of eighty two myriads; (which is either the number of the threads in it, or the sum of the golden pence it cost. Some copies read, is made by eighty two virgins {x};) two are made every year; and three hundred priests wash it."

The Syriac version renders it, "the face of the gate of the temple"; by which may be meant, perhaps, the veil of the gate of Ulam, or of the porch {y}. The Jews have a tradition {z} that

``forty years before the destruction of the temple, the gates of it opened of themselves. R. Jochanan ben Zaccai reproved them, saying, O temple! temple! wherefore dost thou fright thyself? I know thy end is to be destroyed; for so prophesied of thee Zechariah, the son of, Iddo, "open thy gates, O Lebanon", &c. "#Zec 11:1".

But whether this may be referred to in the above version, or has any reference to the evangelic history, I will not say. Other writers, as Josephus {a}, and Egesippus {b}, speak of the eastern gate of the city, which was of brass, and as much as twenty men could shut, opening of its own accord, before the destruction of the temple; which perhaps the Jewish tradition rather regards. This rending of the veil was done, as some think, in token of mourning for, and testifying abhorrence at the crucifixion of Christ; the temple rending its garments, the veil, at the death of its Lord, proprietor, and type, as the high priest did his at supposed blasphemy; or to show that the Lord, who had taken up his residence in the most holy place between the cherubim, over the mercy seat, in thick darkness, was now about to remove, and leave the house desolate; or it signified the rending of Christ's flesh, the breaking of his body for us, which was typified by the veil; see "#Heb 10:20", and may also denote both the fulfilment and abrogation of the ceremonial law, which had its end in the death of Christ; and likewise the more clear discoveries of the mysteries of grace under the Gospel, in which they are laid to open view, and are beheld with open face: to which may be added, that this pointed out, that the way to the holiest of all, to heaven, of

which this was a figure, was now made manifest; and was plain and accessible, as it was, first to Christ, who entered by his own blood, as the forerunner; and also to his people, who likewise have boldness to enter by the same.

**"And the earth did quake"**: whether this earthquake reached only to the spot of ground where Christ was crucified, and on which the city and temple of Jerusalem stood; or whether it extended to other parts of the earth; since, in the reign of Tiberius Caesar, as Pliny {c} relates, there was an earthquake, in which twelve cities in Asia fell, is not certain. However, it was an indication of the divine anger and resentment, and in detestation of the sin of crucifying Christ; see "#Ps 18:7", and was an emblem of the shaking and removing of the Jewish church state and ordinances, "#Heb 12:26,27".

**"And the rocks rent"**; which were near Mount Calvary, and about Jerusalem; and, as we are told, the clefts are to be seen to this day, and which appear to be supernatural. This was also a token of divine wrath and fury, "#Na 1:5,6", and a rebuke of the stupidity and hardness of the Jews, who were unmoved when rocks were rent asunder, being harder than they; and an emblem of the future conversion of many through the powerful ministry of the word, and in consequence of Christ's death; when hearts, as hard as rocks, were broke in pieces, stony hearts taken away, and hearts of flesh given; of which the three thousand being pricked to the heart under Peter's sermon, were an instance. [Read the Book of Acts for an excellent account of the Jews who flooded into the new church, *ed.*]

{t} Maimon. Cele Hamikdash, c. 8. sect. 14. Kimchi in Sepher Shorash rad.

{u} T. Hieros. Shekalim, fol. 51.

{w} Misn. Shekalim, c. 8. sect. 5. Shernot Rabba, sect. 50. fol. 144. 2. Bernidbar Rabba, sect. 4. fol. 183. 2.

{x} Vid. Bartenora & Yom. Tob. in ib.

{y} Vid. Bartenora in ib.

{z} T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 39. 2. Jarchi & Kimchi in Zech. xi. i. Ganz Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 25. 2.

{a} L. 8. c. 12.

{b} L. 5. c. 44.

{c} L. 2. c. 84.