

## The Tragedy and Triumph of the Cross

Matthew 27:45-54

### A. Introduction

1. Sometimes crazy things happen at church. A pastor in Texas tells a story.
2. Water started dripping through the ceiling onto the choir.
3. The air conditioning units in the attic were overflowing through the ceiling.
4. Two men went up & you could hear them walking across the ceiling joists.
5. Suddenly one of them came through the ceiling, grabbed a joist & held on!
6. The Guest Speaker looked at the pastor and said,
7. "Are we having a healing service? Someone's coming down through the roof!"
8. After the service, a first-time attendee came to shake the pastor's hand.
9. He said, "Pastor, I am sorry. this was all my fault.
10. I told my wife, "If I go to Church, the roof will cave in. And sure enough, it did!"

### B. The Temple Was In An Uproar

1. Many mysterious things happened on the day Jesus died.
  - a. it became dark at noon,
  - b. an earthquake occurred,
  - c. and tombs opened and Jewish saints came out of them.
2. But the most mysterious and ominous event that took place was when the massive veil before the Holy of Holies was torn in half from top to bottom.
3. It was torn by invisible hands at the very moment that Jesus gave up His Spirit.
4. The sound of the veil tearing must have been deafening.
5. Imagine the priests hearing it, feeling the earthquake, etc. What could it mean?
6. What would have been happening in the temple?
7. Jesus died at 3 p.m. just before the Passover sacrifices were due to be offered.
8. There must have been thousands of priests on duty.
9. Estimated more than two million as Jews made pilgrimages for the celebration.
10. The Temple must have been jammed with multitudes with their lambs.
11. The High Priest and his associates were preparing for the evening sacrifice.
12. At the exact moment Jesus was breathing His last breath on the Cross at Golgotha, Caiaphas the high priest was probably standing in the inner court of the temple, preparing to offer the blood of a spotless Passover lamb.
13. At that very instant, the massive, fortified veil that stood before the Holy of Holies was suddenly split in half from the top all the way to the bottom!
14. We have all heard about the veil. It wasn't just an everyday type curtain!
15. The veil was 60 feet long, 30 feet wide, & as thick as the palm of a man's hand.
16. An ancient document said it "took 300 priests to lift it."
17. The sound of the veil tearing must have been deafening as it ripped, starting from the top and going all the way down to the floor.
18. It was as if invisible, divine hands reached out, grabbed it, & tore it to shreds.
19. Only God could have torn that veil; no man could have done it!
20. Imagine the priests seeing and hearing the veil tearing!
21. Then an earthquake shook the Temple, & the lamp in the holy place went out.
22. Also, that the Great Temple Gates supernaturally opened by themselves.
23. The priests would probably have fled with fear & horror, fearing sudden death.

### C. What Was The Purpose Of The Veil

1. This veil was a large piece of material woven of blue, purple, crimson, and white thread, and embroidered with cherubim.
2. It was many layers thick and acted as a barrier or wall between the holy place and the holy of holies in the Jewish Temple.
3. Ordinary priests could enter the first room of the Temple, but only the high priest could enter the holy of holies, once a year, on the Day of Atonement.
4. The veil was also for concealment.
5. The word 'veil' in Greek (katapetasma) means 'that which is spread out before.'
6. It showed that the knowledge about God – the mysteries – were not yet revealed during the Old Testament period.
7. Mainly it's symbolized the separation between God and Man that existed until the blood of Christ eternally atoned for sin.
8. It was a part of Mosaic Covenant.
9. God gave the people of Israel the Sacrificial system to atone for their sins.
10. He gave them a Temple, a Priesthood, & proscribed animal sacrifices that could temporarily (Heb. 10:4) cover their sins.
11. On a special day, called the Day of Atonement, the High Priest was to enter the inner sanctuary of the Temple, the Holy of Holies. (Leviticus 16:12-13).
12. He waved a censor and sprinkled blood for his sins and the sins of all Israel
13. During this visit in the Holy of Holies, there was the imminent danger of death, due to failure in some aspect of the high priest's atonement or personal sin.
14. Some sources say that he went in with a rope around his foot, so that if he died, his body could be retrieved, since no one else was authorized to enter this area.
15. The blood of bulls & goats could never take away sin.
16. We know, because the veil was never taken away!
17. No matter how great the sacrifice, the veil remained between God and man.

### D. The Rest Of Jerusalem Was Shaken As Well

1. There was a massive earthquake, when rocks split, and tombs broke open.
2. People raised to life & coming into the city. Talk about getting your attention!
3. This attests to the power of Jesus' death, with victory over sin & death.
4. This shows we can find hope in the resurrection power of Christ.
5. It also gives us assurance of eternal life and the defeat of death.
6. We then have the Centurion's confession. "Truly this was the Son of God."
7. Even a Roman officer recognized the divine nature of Jesus through these events.
8. Acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God and respond in faith and worship.
9. Recognize His lordship over our lives.

### F. Conclusion:

1. This day presents both the tragedy of Jesus' suffering & triumph of His sacrifice.
2. Contemplate the depth of Christ's love.
3. We have the privilege of approaching God boldly through Christ's actions.
4. Avail yourself of the restored relationship made possible by His sacrifice.
5. Repent of our sins, and commit to living in the light of His redemptive work.