



## Behind Enemy Lines Training Saints

Written by an Inmate

### The Unveiled Path to God

Brother Eric

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**Mark 15:37-38**, “And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed His last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.” This is just one of the miracles that took place during Christ’s crucifixion, and it’s easy to overlook. But when we look deeper into it, we see a glorious picture of what God really did for us that day.

So, to better understand all that’s going on here, we need to dig into the **Old Testament** to learn a bit more about the temple. Fortunately, the writer of **Hebrews** did this for us and gives us a nice summary starting at **Chapter 9**:

<sup>1</sup>Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. <sup>2</sup>For a tent [the Tabernacle – the basis for the design of the temple] was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. <sup>3</sup>Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place [or the Holy of Holies], <sup>4</sup>having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold ...

The ark of the covenant (of “Indiana Jones” fame) contained the tablets inscribed with the 10 Commandments that Moses received from God. The lid of the ark was called the “mercy seat,” and that is the place where only the high priest was allowed to approach once a year on the Day of Atonement to atone for the sins of the people through the blood of a sacrifice. If we were to read on in **Hebrews**, we’d see that the design of the temple is a copy of a heavenly reality. It was just a shadow of the true temple in heaven where the Most Holy Place is God’s throne room, and the mercy seat His throne. Even as just an earthly copy, the temple was a very holy place (hence the names), and the mercy seat on the ark in the Holy of Holies was that much more.

We, as sinful men, can never hope to approach God. His holiness would essentially burn us up like we were approaching the surface of the sun. We see this happen a few times in the **Old Testament** like in **1 Samuel 6:19** when the Lord struck down 70 men who inappropriately looked at the ark when it was being returned by the Philistines. Or when Uzzah was struck down for trying to catch it as the cart it was on became unstable (see **2 Samuel 6: 6-7**). God warned others beforehand in **Numbers 4:20** to not look upon the holy things even for a moment, lest they die.

So, there’s no hope for any of us to approach God ourselves without something changing. Now, the high priest was allowed to go as I mentioned, so we need a high priest to make atonement for us – and that’s what we have in Jesus! He can not only approach the mercy seat without fear, but He can approach the actual throne of God in heaven – because it’s His throne (!) and He made the perfect sacrifice: His blood! And He gave us more than a temporary atonement like the high priests would do year after year – His offering. His sacrifice is permanent for all who accept it. He fulfilled what was required of the old covenant, the old system of sacrifices, but made a new way, a better way, a way that can truly purify our hearts through His Spirit and give us peace with God.

Okay, so back to the curtain. It's described as a "veil of blue and purple and scarlet fabrics and fine twined linen. It shall be made with cherubim [a type of angel] skillfully worked into it" (**Exodus 26:21** cf. [compare] **2 Chronicle 3:14**). It was about 30' by 30' and of the highest quality – so not something that would easily tear, especially all at once and the full length. This veil represented the final layer of separation of God from sinful man. When God cast man out of the garden of Eden, we read in **Genesis 3:24** that "He drove out the man and at the east of the garden of Eden He placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life." The veil with its cherubim embroidered into it was placed on the east side of the Most Holy Place. These fearsome angels guarded the way back to God and to eternal life. But, finally, Jesus made a way through. He ripped open the veil at the cross! He paid for our sins with His blood. He ended the separation that we caused in the garden! When, before, there was no hope – we couldn't even look at the shadow of the holy things of God – now we have hope! Now we have Jesus' own righteousness as our own through our faith in Him. Now we can not only approach but live in the presence of God forever. Amen!

I'll let the writer of **Hebrews** sum it up for us. Reading from **Chapter 10, Versus 19 to 25**,

<sup>19</sup>Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup>by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh, <sup>21</sup>and since we have a great priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup>let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. <sup>23</sup>Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup>And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, <sup>25</sup>not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Before I go, I wanted to share another miracle of the temple that happened after Jesus died on the cross. In the Babylonian Talmud, Jewish rabbis recorded that the outer doors of the temple, which were cedar and gold and so heavy that they required 20 men to open and could be heard for miles around when they were, opened by themselves nightly. And they record this started 40 years before the destruction of the temple in AD 70 (making it AD 30). So, these non-Christian Jewish rabbis who saw this as a sign of the impending destruction of the temple (see **Zechariah 11:1**) actually recorded another miracle of Jesus! He not only tore open the veil to the Most Holy Place, the throneroom of God, but He opened wide the doors of heaven itself! He opened the doors so anyone can come in and dwell with Him. He ended the separation of God and man! So, we can say along with Paul, "For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (**Romans 8: 38-39**).

Amen.

FURTHER READING: rest of **Hebrews 9**