



THE CURTAIN IS DOWN

KEY SCRIPTURES: Hebrews 10:19-23, Matthew. 27:51, Mark 15:38, Luke 23:45, Exodus 20-31, 35-40; Exodus 26:31-33, Hebrews 9:15, John 19:30, John 3:16, 2 Peter 3:9, 1 Corinthians 15:21-22

If you have read many of my devotionals, you will know that I sometimes refer to movies I have watched. I have even written about this one before, but there is a different part that I want to revisit.

If you have never seen *The Passion of the Christ*, maybe even choosing not to because you caught wind of its brutality, you likely still know what it is about. You know that it gives us just the slightest glimpse of what our Jesus went through on our behalf. But I am not going to talk about the scourging and the cross this time. This time, I just have to talk about the curtain.

I can say with gratitude for the entirety of what Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection did for us that what we are told about the temple curtain is one of my favorite parts of the story. And yet it can be really easy to miss it, right there in the middle of the cruelty that became our redemption. It gets only a single sentence in three of the four gospels: "*The curtain of the temple was torn in two.*" And two of the writers go on to tell us that it was torn from the top to the bottom.

In the movie, the curtain scene is quick, as easy to miss on the big screen as it is in the pages of scripture. It is sandwiched in there with the earthquake that happens when Jesus has just died, just like the Bible tells us it was. What scripture doesn't tell us but that the movie so beautifully added was the reaction of one of the religious leaders who was at the temple at the time.

The ground had stopped shaking and some of the religious leaders were surveying the damage. And when one of them saw that the curtain was torn, allowing the Most Holy Place to be completely unveiled, he was visibly undone. Everything he had ever known—God being separated from man and man being separated from God—was no more.

True to life, the curtain had given him and his fellow religious leaders a role of significance. They were the insiders. They had been the bridge that people had to cross to get to God, just like they had been ever since God established the Israelites' system of worship and sacrifices in the desert after their liberation from Egyptian slavery.

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"...so we can know our value, live with purpose, and make a difference...[In that order.](#)"



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But that bridge had just collapsed in the form of useless pieces of fabric where just moments before there had been one thick, separating curtain.

There was no denying that things had just drastically changed.

Looking back at the stir Jesus always caused, it is easy to see that He had spent his entire ministry taking on the norm, hinting that change was coming, and removing threads from that curtain—and its divisiveness—one at a time. He had proclaimed a new way to God: Himself. And it infuriated, confused, and challenged the religious leaders—just like the one in panic mode during the earthquake scene—because it provided a way to freedom that they didn't know what to do with. They had been the way to God. They had doled out things like worth and forgiveness that this Jesus fellow liked to scatter about like breadcrumbs to hungry birds. This man Jesus even had the audacity to try and remove the "Hello, my name is Mediator" label from their robes so He could wear it Himself.

They didn't know the half of it.

Neither did we until the apostles started piecing together the whole story with the help of the Holy Spirit, telling us that Jesus had the right to do everything He did—against the norm or not—because He was the only One Who could. He knew about the rules and their penalties—every last rule that the religious leaders fought so hard to keep and enforce. And by His sinless life, substitutionary death, and powerful resurrection, He earned the right to stamp "Paid in Full" over the top of them all.

Jesus is our bridge now, and that is what makes the scriptures about the curtain as powerful in their own way as John 3:16. There is no more separation between God and man because Jesus' death made it possible to be removed.

When the curtain was torn from top to bottom—as an act of God rather than of man—the invitation was signed, sealed, and delivered, telling one and all, "Come, friends! The curtain is down. Everyone is invited into the presence of God."

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What one man squandered in the Garden of Eden has been redeemed by the obedience of another: the invitation to have an eternal relationship with God.

Face-to-face. That's how God wanted to see us from the beginning. That is how He originally created us. And with the curtain down, He could have that again. And, still today, so can we.

Like the priest portrayed in the movie, we have a choice to make. We can panic at the thought that the curtain is down. We can fear a holy God being able to see us and everything that dirties us without a curtain to try and hide what we want to hide. We can fear a new "normal," even though it is far superior to anything we have known before. Or we can rejoice that Jesus hand-delivered the invitation to come freely and boldly into the Father's presence. An invitation that we can accept by simply admitting how much we needed Jesus to die in our place to receive it.

The curtain is down, and we can finally see His face again with nothing in the way.

What a glorious, redemptive day.

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Source Information:

The Passion of the Christ. Dir. Mel Gibson, Perf. Jim Caviezel, Monica Bellucci, Maia Morgenstern, Icon Productions, 2004

Scripture References

Curtain/Earthquake: Matthew. 27:51, Mark 15:38, Luke 23:45

Laws/Designs/Priestly Duties – given while the Israelites were in the desert after being freed from Egyptian slavery: Exodus 20-31, 35-40; Leviticus

Curtain design: Exodus 26:31-33

Mediator: Hebrews 9:15

"Paid in full"/("It is finished"): John 19:30

Everyone is invited: John 3:16, 2 Peter 3:9

Garden (Adam)/Jesus: 1 Corinthians 15:21-22

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