



water from rock

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – April 7, 2022

The Lord be with you.

When I was a pastor, I did children sermons that we're actually object lessons. I would take an object from everyday life, like a work glove, a bar of soap, and I would use it to teach the children a spiritual truth. But I remember how even adults during those object lessons that they would rowse themselves away and set up and pay attention because whatever our age, we like visuals, we like object lessons as they communicate at a deep level.

Perhaps the most eloquent, the most dramatic object lesson in all of history is that that God gave that the moment that Jesus cried out on a cross, It is finished. At that moment, God gave us the object lesson as at that moment, God tore into the curtain in the temple, He tore it from the top to the bottom. Right at the hour of afternoon prayer in the temple, as a priest was offering a lamb on the altar, the lamb of God, Jesus cries out, It is finished. And at that very moment, God gives us an object lesson as he tears into the curtain in the temple.

Now to better understand the significance of God tearing the temple curtain in two, it helps to know something about the design of the temple, to know that everything about the layout of the temple shouted, danger. Keep your distance. As a temple was pattern after the tabernacle in the wilderness, that was built by Moses. Now, if you look at the design of the temple, you see that everything about the temple was designed like a huge obstacle course, the temple complex stretched out over 40 acres in order to protect in order to guard entry to the temple. The temple was purposely designed to be a series of barriers to illustrate that sin separates us from a holy God. Well there was first the outermost court, which was the court of the Gentiles, where the Gentiles could go, then there was a court of women, where Israelite women could go, but no farther, and there was a court of man where Israelite men could go, but no farther, then there was a Court of Priest, and then steps leading up to the temple itself to the holy place where priests did their service and then quickly left. And then there was the final separation, the final barrier, which was this massive curtain and separating the Holy Place, where the priests serve, separating the Holy place from the Holy of Holies, where on just one day of the year, the Day of Atonement, one person, only the high priest could enter with the blood of the atoning sacrifice and then quickly leave.

And so there was this large curtain that separated the holy place from the Holy of Holies. Now, the Mishnah, which is a collection of the sayings of rabbis from right about the time of Jesus, the Mishnah tells us that the curtain that separated the holy place from the Holy of Holies, it was 60 feet high and the thickness of a man's hand. It was massive. And at the moment that Jesus, the lamb of God dies after having offered the one perfect sacrifice for our sins, crying out It is finished. At that moment,



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as a great object lesson, God tore into the curtain from the top to the bottom. As God was illustrating what Christ did for you and me on the cross, that through Jesus atoning death, the way to God for you and me is open wide as sinners, we are put right with God. Here's how the apostle Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, as he says in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them. For our sake, God made Jesus to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Charlotte Elliot was a young poet, experiencing great spiritual struggle when one night her family was visited by an old preacher, and the old preacher asked Charlotte... He said, Charlotte, when are you gonna come to Jesus? And Charlotte said, Well, come to Jesus. I don't know how... You don't know how the old preacher replied, You don't know how? Well Charlotte, you come to Jesus just as you are. And from that experience, Charlotte Elliott wrote a poem that, whether you might know that you might have sung... "Just as I am, without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me, and that Thou bids me come to thee O Lamb of God. I come."

God tore the curtain in two from the top to the bottom, to illustrate, to tell us that through the cross of Jesus Christ, we have been put right with God. As he has opened wide for you and me the way to God, that we might forever be at peace with God, to live in His love. And so today, we come to God just as we are, to forever live in his life and love.

I'm Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thank you for listening. Until next time.